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BARONESS STAËL HOLSTEIN.

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PART THE THIRD.

PHILOSOPHY AND MORALS.

CHAPTER I.

Of Philosophy.

THE world has been pleased, for some time past, to throw great discredit upon the very name of philosophy. The case is common with all those terms, the signification of which is capable of much extension: they become alternately the objects of benediction or blame among mankind, according to their use in fortunate or unhappy periods: but, in spite of the casual injustice or panegyric of individuals and of nations, philosophy, liberty, religion, never change their value. Man has spoken evil things of the sun, of love, and of life: he has suffered, he has felt himself consumed, by these lights of nature; but would he therefore extinguish them?

Every thing that has a tendency to set bounds to our faculties, bears the stamp of a degrading doctrine. We ought to direct those faculties to the lofty end of our existence—our advance to moral perfection. But it is not by the partial suicide of this or that power of our nature, that we shall be rendered capable of rising towards such an object: all our resources are not too numerous to forward our approach to it; and, if Heaven had granted more genius to man, he would have advanced so much the more in virtue.

Among the different branches of philosophy, metaphysics have, especially, occupied the attention of the Germans. The objects which this pursuit embraces, may be divided into three classes. The first relates to the mystery of the creation; that is to say, to the Infinite in all things; the second, to the formation of ideas in the human mind; and the third, to the exercise of our faculties, without ascending to their source.

The first of these studies, that which applies itself to the discovery of the secret of the universe, was cultivated among the Greeks, as it now is among the Germans. It is impossible to deny that such a pursuit, however sublime in its principle, makes us

feel our impotence at every step; and discouragement follows those efforts which cannot produce a result. The usefulness of the third sort of metaphysics, that which is included in the observation of the actions of our understanding, cannot be contested; but this usefulness is confined to the circle of daily experience. The philosophical reflections of the second class—those which are directed to the nature of the human mind, and to the origin of our ideas—appear to me the most interesting of all. It is not likely that we should ever be able to know the eternal truths which explain the existence of this world: the desire that we feel for such knowledge, is among the number of those noble thoughts which draw us towards another life: but it is not for nothing, that the faculty of self-examination has been given to us. Doubtless, to observe the progress of our intellect, such as it exists, is already to avail ourselves of this faculty; nevertheless, in rising higher, in striving to learn whether that intellect acts spontaneously, or whether we can only think when thought is excited by external objects, we shall cast additional light upon the free-will

of man, and consequently upon vice and virtue.

A crowd of moral and religious questions depends upon the manner in which we consider the origin and formation of our ideas. It is the diversity of their systems in this respect, above all others, that distinguishes the German from the French philosophers. We may easily conceive, that if the difference is at the fountain-head, it must show itself in the derived streams: it is impossible, therefore, to become acquainted with Germany, without tracing the progress of that philosophy, which, from the days of Leibnitz down to our own, has incessantly exerted so great a power over the republic of letters.

There are two methods of considering the philosophy of the human mind; either in its theory or in its results. The examination of the theory demands a capacity which belongs not to me; but it is easy to remark the influence which this or that metaphysical opinion exercises over the developement of the understanding and of the soul. The Gospel tells us, "that we must judge of "prophets by their works:" this maxim may also guide our inquiry into the different systems of philosophy; for every thing that

is of immoral tendency must be sophistical. This life has no value, unless it is subservient to the religious education of our hearts; unless it prepares us for a higher destiny, by our free choice of virtue upon earth. Metaphysics, social institutions, arts, sciences, all ought to be appreciated accordingly as they contribute to the moral perfection of mankind: this is the touchstone granted to the ignorant as well as to the learned. For if the knowledge of the means belongs only to the initiated, the results are discernible by all the world.

It is necessary to be accustomed to that mode of reasoning which is used in geometry, in order to gain a full comprehension of metaphysics. In this science, as in that of calculation, if we omit the least link in the chain of evidence, we destroy the whole connexion. Metaphysical reasonings are more abstract, and not less precise, than mathematical; and yet their object is indefinite. We must unite, as metaphysicians, two of the most opposite faculties—fancy, and the power of calculation: we have to measure a cloud with the same accuracy that we measure a field; and there is no study which requires such closeness of at-

tention; nevertheless, in the most sublime questions there is always some point of view within the reach of every body, and it is that point which I design to seize and to present.

I put a question one day to Fichte, who possesses one of the strongest and most thinking heads in Germany, whether he could not more easily tell me his moral system than his metaphysical? "The one "depends upon the other," he replied; and the remark was very profound: it comprehends all the motives of that interest which we can take in philosophy.

We have been accustomed to regard it as destructive of every belief of the heart; it would then indeed be the enemy of man; but it is not so with the doctrine of Plato, nor with that of the Germans: they consider *sentiment* as a *fact*, the primitive phænomenon of mind; and they look upon the power of philosophical reasoning as destined solely to investigate the meaning of this *fact*.

The enigma of the universe has wasted the meditations of many, who have still deserved our admiration, because they felt themselves summoned to something better

than the present world. Geniuses of a lofty kind love to wander unceasingly around the abyss of thoughts that are without an end; but still they must turn themselves away from it, for the mind fatigues itself in vain, in these efforts to scale the heavens.

The origin of thought has occupied the attention of all true philosophers. Are there two natures in man? If there be but one, is it mind or matter? If there be two, do ideas come by the senses, or do they spring up in the soul? Or, in truth, are they a mixture of the action of external objects upon us, and of the internal faculties which we possess?

To these three questions, which at all times have divided the philosophical world, is united the inquiry which most immediately touches upon virtue—the inquiry, whether free-will or fatality decides the resolutions of man.

Among the ancients, fatality arose from the will of the gods; among the moderns, it is attributed to the course of events. The ancient fatality gave a new evidence to free-will; for the will of man struggled against the event, and moral resistance was unconquerable: the fatalism of the moderns, on the

contrary, necessarily destroys the belief in free-will: if circumstances make us what we are, we cannot oppose their empire; if external objects are the cause of all that passes in our mind, what independent thought can free us from their ascendency? The fatalism which descended from heaven, filled the soul with a holy terror; while that which attaches us to earth only works our degradation. It may be asked, to what purpose all these questions? It may be answered, to what purpose any thing that bears no relation to them? For what is there more important to man, than to know whether he really is responsible for his actions; and what sort of a proportion there is between the power of the will and the empire of circumstances over it? What would become of conscience, if our habits alone gave birth to it; if it was nothing but the product of colours, of sounds, of perfumes, of circumstances, in short, of every kind, with which we may have been surrounded from our infancy?

That species of metaphysics, which endeavours to discover what is the source of our ideas, has a powerful influence, by its consequences, upon the nature and energy of our

will; that species is at once the most exalted and the most necessary of all our kinds of knowledge; and the advocates of the highest utility, namely of moral utility, cannot undervalue it.

CHAPTER II.

Of English Philosophy.

EVERY thing seems to testify in us the existence of a double nature. The influence of the senses and that of the mind share our being between them; and, accordingly as Philosophy inclines towards the one or the other, opinions and sentiments are in every respect diametrically opposite. We may also describe the dominion of the senses, and that of thought, by other terms: —there is in man that which perishes with his earthly existence, and that which may survive him; that which experience enables him to acquire, and that with which his moral instinct inspires him—the finite and the infinite; but in what manner soever we express ourselves, it is always necessary to grant that there are two different principles of life in a creature subject to death, and destined to immortality.

A tendency to spiritualize has been always very manifest among the people of the North;

and even before the introduction of Christianity, this bias made itself perceptible through the violence of warlike passions. The Greeks had faith in external miracles;—the German nations believe the miracles of the soul. All their poetry is filled with misgivings, with presages, with prophecies of the heart; and while the Greeks united themselves to nature by their indulgence in pleasure, the inhabitants of the North raised themselves to their Creator by religious sentiments. In the South, Paganism deified the phænomena of nature; in the North, they were inclined to believe in magic, because it attributes to the mind of man a boundless power over the material world. The soul and nature, liberty and necessity, divide the dominion of existence; and just as we place the commanding force within ourselves or without us, we are the sons of heaven, or the slaves of earth.

At the revival of letters, there were some who occupied themselves with the subtilties of the schools in metaphysics, and others who believed in the superstitions of magic in the sciences: the art of observation reigned no more in the empire of the senses, than enthusiasm in the empire of the soul:

with very few exceptions, there was neither experience nor inspiration among the philosophers. A giant appeared—this was Bacon: never were the discoveries of thought, nor the wonders of nature, so well conceived by the same intelligence. There is not a phrase in his writings which does not imply years of reflection and of study; he animates his metaphysics with his knowledge of the human heart; he knows how to generalize facts by philosophy. In physical science he has created the art of experiment: but it does not at all follow, as it has been attempted to make us believe, that he was the advocate of that system exclusively, which grounds all our ideas upon our sensations. He admits inspiration in every thing that belongs to the soul; and he thinks it even necessary, in order to interpret natural phænomena according to general principles. But, in his age, there were still alchemists, diviners, and sorcerers: they were ignorant enough of Religion, in the greatest part of Europe, to believe that there were some truths of which she forbade the promulgation—she who leads us into all truth. Bacon was struck with these errors; —his age had a bias towards superstition, as our age has towards incredulity. At the

epoch in which he lived, it was right to endeavour to bring experimental philosophy into favour; in our æra, he would have felt the necessity of reanimating the internal source of moral beauty, and of recalling incessantly this truth to the memory of man—that he exists in *himself*, in his sentiment, and in his will. When the age is superstitious, the genius of observation is timid; the natural world is ill known:—when the age is incredulous, enthusiasm exists no more, and we are thenceforth ignorant of the soul and of heaven.

At a time when the progress of the human mind was unsure on every side, Bacon collected all his forces to trace out the way in which experimental philosophy ought to proceed; and his writings, even yet, serve for conductors to those who study nature. As a minister of state, he was for a long time occupied with government and with politics. The strongest heads are those which unite the taste and the habit for meditation with a capacity for business. Bacon, under both these views, was a wonderful genius; but his philosophy and his character failed in the same point. He was not virtuous enough fully to feel the moral

liberty of man: nevertheless, we cannot compare him to the materialists of the last age; and his successors have pushed the theory of experience much beyond his intention. He is far, I repeat it, from attributing all our ideas to our sensations, and from considering analysis as the sole instrument of discovery. He frequently follows a more daring path; and if he adheres to experimental logic to remove all the prejudices which encumber his progress, it is to the spring of genius alone that he trusts to forward his advance.

"The human mind," says Luther, "is "like a drunken peasant on horseback; when "we put it up on one side, it falls down on "the other."—Thus man has incessantly fluctuated between his two natures; sometimes his thoughts have disentangled him from his sensations; sometimes his sensations have absorbed his thoughts, and he has wished, successively, to refer every thing to one or the other: it however appears to me, that the moment for a fixed doctrine has arrived. Metaphysics are about to undergo a revolution, like that which Copernicus has produced in the system of the world. They are about to replace the soul of man in

the centre, and to make it, in every respect, like the sun; round which external objects trace their circle, and from which they borrow their light.

The genealogical tree of the different branches of human knowledge, in which every science is referred to a certain faculty, is doubtless one of the titles of Bacon to the admiration of posterity; but that which constitutes his real glory is this—that he has announced his opinion, that there was no absolute separation of one science from another; but that general philosophy reunited them all. He is not the author of that anatomical method, which considers the intellectual powers severally, or each by itself; and which appears to be ignorant of the admirable unity in the moral being. Sensibility, imagination, reason, each is subservient to the other. Every one of these faculties would be nothing but a disease, but weakness, instead of strength, if it were not modified or completed by the collective character of our nature. The exact sciences, at a certain height, stand in need of the Imagination. She, in her turn, must support herself upon he accurate knowledge of Nature. Reason, of all

our faculties, appears to be that which would most easily do without the assistance of the others; and yet, if a person were entirely unprovided with imagination and sensibility, he might by that very want become, if we may so express it, the fool of Reason; and, seeing nothing in life but calculations and material interests, deceive himself as much concerning the characters and affections of men, as the enthusiastic being whose fancy pictures all around him disinterestedness and love.

We follow a bad system of education, when we aim at the exclusive developement of this or that quality of mind; for, to devote ourselves to one faculty, is to take up an intellectual trade. Milton says, with reason, that our education is not good, excepting when it renders us capable of every employ in peace or war: all that makes the man *A Man*, is the true object of instruction.

Not to know any thing of a science but that portion of it which individually belongs to us, is to apply the division of labour (inculcated by Smith) to the liberal studies, when it is only adapted to the mechanic arts. When we arrive at that height where every science touches upon all the rest in

some particulars, it is then that we approach the region of universal ideas; and the air which breathes from that region gives life to all our thoughts.

The soul is a fire that darts its rays through all the senses: it is in this fire that existence consists: all the observations and all the efforts of philosophers ought to turn towards this point of individuality—the centre and the moving power of our sentiments and our ideas. Doubtless, the imperfection of language compels us to make use of erroneous expressions; we are obliged to repeat, according to the customary phrase, such a person is endowed with the power of reason, of imagination, or of sensibility, &c.; but, if we wish to be understood in a single word, we ought to say, *he has soul—an abundance of soul**. It is this divine spirit that makes the whole man.

Love is the instructor who teaches us more certainly what belongs to the mysteries of the soul, than the utmost metaphysical subtilty. We never attach ourselves to this

* M. Ancillon, of whom I shall have occasion to speak in the Fourth Part of this work, has made use of this expression in a book, upon which one cannot grow tired of meditating.

or that qualification of the object of our preference; and every madrigal reveals a great philosophical truth, when it says—"I love "I know not why!" for this "I know not "why," is that collective character, and that harmony, which we recognise by love, by admiration, by all the sentiments which reveal to us what is most deep and most secret in the heart of another.

The method of analysis, which can only examine by division, applies itself like the dissecting-knife to dead nature; but it is a bad instrument to teach us to understand what is living; and if we feel a difficulty in verbally defining that animated conception which represents whole objects to our mind, it is precisely because that conception clings more closely to the very essence of things. To divide, in order to comprehend, is a sign of weakness in philosophy; as to divide, in order to rule, is a sign of weakness in political power.

Bacon adhered much more than is believed to that ideal philosophy, which, from the days of Plato down to our own, has constantly re-appeared under different forms.—Nevertheless, the success of his analytical method in the exact sciences has necessarily

had an influence over his metaphysical system. His doctrine of sensations, considered as the origin of ideas, has been understood in a much more positive sense than that in which he maintained it himself. We can clearly see the influence of this doctrine in the two schools which it has produced—that of Hobbes, and that of Locke. Certainly they differ very much in their intent; but their principles are alike in many respects.

Hobbes embraced to the letter that philosophy which derives all our ideas from the impressions of sense. He feared not the consequences; and he has boldly said, "that "the soul is as much subjected to necessity, "as society to despotism." He admits the fatalism of sensation as the controller of thought, and that of force as the controller of action. He annihilates moral as well as civil liberty; thinking, with reason, that one depends upon the other. He was an Atheist and a slave, and nothing is more in the course of things; for if there is in man but the impress of sensations received from without, earthly power is every thing, and our soul and our destiny equally depend upon it.

The cultivation of all pure and elevated

sentiments is so consolidated in England, by political and religious institutions, that the scepticisms of genius revolve around these imposing columns without ever shaking them. Hobbes, accordingly, has gained few partisans in his country; but the influence of Locke has been more universal. As his character was moral and religious, he did not allow himself to use any of those dangerous reasonings which are necessarily derived from his metaphysical system; and the greater part of his countrymen, in adopting that system, have shown the same glorious want of consistency, which he did—have separated results from principles—until Hume, and the French philosophers, having admitted the system, made application of it in a much more logical manner.

The metaphysical doctrines of Locke have had no other effect upon the wits of England, than to tarnish a little their natural originality: if they had even dried up the source of high philosophical reflection, they would not have destroyed that religious sentiment which can so well supply the want of it: but these doctrines, so generally received throughout the rest of Europe (Germany excepted), have been one of the prin-

cipal causes of that immorality, the advocates of which have formed it into a theory, in order to make its practice more certain.

Locke exerted his especial endeavours to prove that there is nothing innate in the mind. He was right in his own sense, for he always blended with the meaning of the word Idea that of a notion acquired by experience: ideas thus conceived are the result of the objects that excite, of the comparisons that assemble them, and of the language that expedites their union. But this is not the case with the sentiments, with the dispositions, and the faculties which constitute the laws of the human understanding, in the same manner that attraction and impulse constitute the laws of external nature.

It is truly worth observing what kind of arguments Locke has been compelled to adopt, in order to prove that every thing in the mind came there by means of sensation. If these arguments led to the truth, doubtless we ought to overcome the moral aversion with which they inspire us; but, in general, we may trust to this sort of aversion as an infallible token of what must be avoided. Locke wished to show that conscience, or the sense of good and evil, was

not innate in man; and that we know nothing of justice or injustice, except from experience, as we learn to distinguish red from blue. To arrive at this conclusion, he has carefully inquired after all those countries where the laws and customs pay respect to crimes; those, for instance, in which it is thought a duty to kill an enemy; to despise marriage; to put a father to death, when he has grown old. He attentively collects every thing that travellers have related of barbarities which have passed into daily practice. Of what nature then must that system be, which excites, in so virtuous a man as Locke, an eagerness for such narrations?

Let them be melancholy tales, or not, it may be said, the important thing is to know if they are true.—Allow them to be true, of what consequence are they? Do we not know, by our own experience, that circumstances, in other words external objects, have an influence over the manner in which we interpret our duties? Amplify these circumstances, and you will find in them the causes of national error; but is there any nation, or any man, that denies the obligation of all duty? Has it ever been pretended that the ideas of justice and injustice have

no meaning? Different explanations of them may prevail in different places; but the conviction of the principle is every where the same; and it is in this conviction that the primitive impression consists, which we recognise in every being of human birth.

When the savage kills his aged father, he believes that he renders the old man a service; he does not act for his own interest, but for that of his parent: the deed he commits is horrible; and yet he is not on that account devoid of conscience: because he is ignorant, he is not therefore vicious. The sensations, that is to say, the external objects with which he is surrounded, blind him; the inward sentiment, which constitutes the hatred for vice and the love of virtue, does not the less exist within him, because he has been deceived by experience as to the manner in which this sentiment ought to be manifested in his life. To prefer others to ourselves, when virtue commands the preference, is precisely that in which the essence of moral beauty consists; and this admirable instinct of the soul, the opponent of our physical instinct, is inherent in our nature; if it could be acquired, it could also be lost; but it is unchangeable, because it is innate,

It is possible for us to do evil, when we believe we are doing good; a man may be culpable knowingly and willingly; but he cannot admit a contradiction for a truth, that justice is injustice.

There is such a thing as indifference to good and evil, and it is the ordinary result of civilization, when its coldness has reached the point of petrifaction, if the expression may be allowed; this indifference is a much greater argument against an innate conscience than the gross errors of savages: but the most sceptical of men, if they are sufferers from oppression in any relation of life, appeal to justice, as if they had believed in it all their days; and when they are seized with any vivid affection, and tyrannical power is exerted to control it, they can invoke the sentiment of equity with as much force as the most severe of moralists. When the flame of any passion, whether it be indignation or love, takes possession of the soul, the sacred hand-writing of the eternal law may be seen by that light reappearing in our bosoms.

If the accident of birth and education decided the morality of man, how could we accuse him for his actions? If all that com-

poses our will comes to us from external objects, every one may appeal to his own particular relations for the motives of his whole conduct; and frequently these relations differ as much between the inhabitants of the same country, as between an Asiatic and European. If circumstances then were to be the deities of mortals, it would be in order for every man to have his peculiar morality, or rather a want of morals according to his respective practice; and to counteract the evil which sensation might suggest, no efficient reason could be opposed to it, except the public power of punishment: now, if that public power commanded us to be unjust, the question would be resolved; every sensation might be the parent of every idea, which would lead us on to the most complete depravity.

The proofs of the spirituality of the soul cannot be discovered in the empire of the senses. The visible world is abandoned to their dominion; but the invisible will not be subjected to it; and if we do not admit that there are ideas of spontaneous growth, if thought and sentiment depend entirely upon sensations, how should the soul, that submits to such a state of servi-

tude, be an immaterial essence? And if, as nobody denies, the greater part of the knowledge transmitted by the senses is liable to error, what sort of a moral being must that be, who does not act until aroused by outward objects, and by objects even whose appearances are often deceitful?

A French philosopher, making use of the most revolting expression, has said, "that "thought is nothing but the material pro- "duct of the brain." This deplorable definition is the most natural result of that species of metaphysics, which attributes to our sensations the origin of all our ideas. We are in the right, if it be so, to laugh at all that is intellectual, and to make what is impalpable synonymous with what is incomprehensible. If the human mind is but a subtle matter, put in motion by other elements, more or less gross, in comparison with which even it has the disadvantage of being passive; if our impressions and our recollections are nothing but the prolonged vibrations of an instrument, which chance has played upon; then there are only fibres in the brain, there is nothing but physical force in the world, and every thing can be explained according to the laws by which that force is governed. Still there

remain some little difficulties concerning the origin of things, and the end of our existence; but the question has been much simplified—and reason now counsels us to suppress within our souls all the desires and all the hopes that genius, love, and religion call to life; for, according to this system, man would only be another machine in the great mechanism of the universe; his faculties would be all wheel-work, his morality a matter of calculation, and his divinity success.

Locke, believing from the bottom of his soul in the existence of God, established his conviction, without perceiving it, upon reasonings which are all taken out of the sphere of experience: he asserts the existence of an eternal principle, the primary cause of all other causes; thus he enters into the region of infinity, and that region lies beyond all experience: but Locke, at the same time, was so apprehensive lest the idea of God should pass for an innate idea in man, it appeared to him so absurd that the Creator should have deigned to inscribe his name, like that of a great painter, upon the tablet of the soul, that he set himself to discover, out of all the narratives of travellers, some

nations who were destitute of any religious belief. We may, I think, boldly affirm, that such nations do not exist. The impulse that exalts us towards the Supreme Being discovers itself in the genius of Newton as it does in the soul of the poor savage, who worships the stone upon which he finds rest. No man clings exclusively to this world, such as it is at present; and all have felt in their hearts, at some period of their lives, an undefinable inclination towards the supernatural: but, how can it happen, that a being, so religious as Locke, should try to change the primitive characters of belief into an accidental knowledge, which chance may confer or take away? I repeat it—the tendency of any doctrine ought always to be deemed of great account in the judgment which we form upon the truth of that doctrine; for, in theory, the good and the true are inseparable.

All that is visible talks to man of a beginning and an end, of decline and destruction. A divine spark is the only indication of our immortality. From what sensation does this arise? All our sensations fight against it, and yet it triumphs over them all. What! it will be said, do not final causes, do not

the wonders of the universe, the splendour of heaven that strikes our eyes, all declare the magnificence and the goodness of our Creator? The book of nature is contradictory; we see there the emblems of good and evil almost in equal proportion; and things are thus constituted, in order that man may be able to exercise his liberty between opposite probabilities, between fears and hopes almost of equal power. The starry heaven appears to us like the threshold of the Divinity; but all the evils and all the vices of human nature obscure these celestial fires. A solitary voice, without speech, but not without harmony; without force, but irresistible; proclaims a God at the bottom of the human heart: all that is truly beautiful in man springs from what he experiences within himself, and spontaneously; every heroic action is inspired by moral liberty:—the act of devoting ourselves to the divine will, that act which every sensation opposes, and which enthusiasm alone inspires, is so noble and so pure, that the angels themselves, virtuous as they are by nature, and without impediment, might envy it to man.

That species of metaphysics which dis-

places the centre of life, by supposing its impulse to come from without, despoils man of his liberty, and destroys itself; for a spiritual nature no longer exists, when we unite it in such a manner to a corporeal nature, that it is only by consideration for religious opinion we consent to distinguish them: such a system shrinks from its own consequences, excepting when it derives from them, as it has done in France, materialism built upon sensation, and morality built upon interest. The abstract theory of this system was born in England; but none of its consequences have been admitted there. In France they have not had the honour of the discovery, but in a great degree that of the application. In Germany, since the time of Leibnitz, they have opposed the system and its consequences: and, assuredly, it is worthy of enlightened and religious men of all countries, to inquire if those principles, whose results are so fatal, ought to be considered as incontestable truths.

Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Smith, Reid, Dugald Stewart, &c. have studied the operations of the human mind with a rare sagacity: the works of Dugald Stewart, in particular, contain so perfect a theory of the

intellectual faculties, that we may consider them, to use the expression, as the natural history of the moral being. Every individual must recognise in them some portion of himself. Whatever opinion we may have adopted as to the origin of ideas, we must acknowledge the utility of a labour which has for its object the examination of their progress and direction:—but it is not enough to observe the developement of our faculties, we must ascend to their source, in order to give an account of the nature, and of the independence, of the will of man.

We cannot consider that question as an idle one, which endeavours to learn whether the soul has an independent faculty of feeling and of thinking. It is the question of Hamlet—"To be, or not to be?"

CHAPTER III.

Of French Philosophy

DESCARTES, for a long period, was at the head of French philosophers; and if his physics had not been confessedly erroneous, perhaps his metaphysics would have preserved a more lasting ascendant. Bossuet, Fenelon, Pascal, all the great men of the age of Louis XIV. had adopted the Idealism of Descartes: and this system agreed much better with the Catholic religion than that philosophy which is purely experimental; for it appeared singularly difficult to combine a faith in the most mysterious doctrines with the sovereign empire of sensation over the soul.

Among the French metaphysicians who have professed the doctrine of Locke, we must reckon, in the first class, Condillac, whose priestly office obliged him to use some caution in regard to religion; and Bonnet, who, being naturally religious, lived at Geneva; in a country where learning and

piety are inseparable. These two philosophers, Bonnet especially, have established exceptions in favour of revelation; but it appears to me, that one of the causes of the diminution of respect for Religion, is this custom of setting her apart from all the sciences; as if philosophy, reasoning, every thing, in short, which is esteemed in earthly affairs, could not be applied to Religion: an ironical veneration removes her to a distance from all the interests of life; it is, if we may so express ourselves, to bow her out of the circle of the human mind. In every country, where a religious belief is predominant, it is the centre of ideas; and philosophy consists in the rational interpretation of divine truths.

When Descartes wrote, Bacon's philosophy had not yet penetrated into France; and that country was then in the same state of scholastic ignorance and superstition as at the epoch when the great English master of the art of thinking published his works. There are two methods of correcting the prejudices of men—the recourse to experience, and the appeal to reflection. Bacon adopted the first means; Descartes the second. The one has rendered immense service to the

sciences; the other to thought itself, which is the source of all the sciences.

Bacon was a man of much greater genius, and of still ampler learning, than Descartes. He has known how to establish his philosophy in the material world: that of Descartes was brought into discredit by the learned, who attacked with success his opinions upon the system of the world: he could reason justly in the examination of the mind, and deceived himself in relation to the physical laws of the universe: but the opinions of men resting almost entirely upon a blind and precipitate confidence in analogy, they believed that he who had observed so ill what passed without him, was no better instructed as to the world within. In his manner of writing, Descartes shows a simplicity and overflowing goodness of nature, which inspires his readers with confidence; and the energy of his genius will not be contested. Nevertheless, when we compare him, either to the German philosophers or to Plato, we can neither find in his works the theory of idealism in all its abstraction, nor the poetical imagination, which constitutes its beauty. Yet a ray of light had passed over the mind of Descartes, and his is the glory of having

directed the philosophy of his day towards the interior developement of the soul. He produced a great effect by referring all received truths to the test of reflection: these axioms were admired—"I think, therefore I "exist; therefore I have a Creator, the per- "fect source of my imperfect faculties: every "thing without us may be called in question: "truth is only in the mind, and the mind is "the supreme judge of truth."

Universal doubt is the A B C of philosophy: every man begins to reason again by the aid of his own native light, when he attempts to ascend to the principles of things; but the authority of Aristotle had so completely introduced the dogmatic method into Europe, that the age was astonished at the boldness of Descartes, who submitted all opinions to natural judgment.

The Port Royal writers were formed in his school; so that France produced men of a severer turn of thought in the seventeenth than in the eighteenth century. At the side of their graceful and engaging genius appeared a certain gravity, which betrayed the natural influence of a system of philosophy that attributed all our ideas to the power of reflection.

Mallebranche, the principal disciple of Descartes, was a man gifted with the energies of mind in an eminent degree. They have been pleased to consider him as a dreamer in the eighteenth century; and in France it is all over with that writer who has the character of a dreamer; for it implies the idea of total inutility as to the purposes of life, and this is peculiarly offensive to all reasonable persons, as they are entitled;—but this word Utility—is it quite noble enough to be applied to all the cravings of the soul?

The French writers of the eighteenth century excelled most in the study of political liberty; those of the seventeenth in the study of moral liberty. The philosophers of the one period were combatants; of the other anchorets. Under an absolute government, like that of Louis the XIVth, independence finds no asylum but in meditation: in the disorderly reigns of the last century, the men of letters were animated with the desire of winning over the government of their country to the liberal principles and ideas of which England displayed so fair an example. The writers who have not gone beyond this point, are very deserving of the esteem of

their countrymen; but it is not the less true, that the works composed in the seventeenth century are more philosophical, in many respects, than those which have since been published; for philosophy especially consists in the study and the knowledge of our intellectual existence.

The philosophers of the eighteenth century have busied themselves rather with social politics than with the primitive nature of man; those of the seventeenth century, solely and precisely from their being religious men, had a more thorough knowledge of the human heart. During the decline of the French monarchy, the philosophers turned the direction of thought, which they used as a weapon, to what was passing without them: under the empire of Louis the XIVth, they were more attached to the ideal metaphysics, because the exercise of recollection was more habitual to them, and they had more occasion for it. In order to raise the French genius to its highest degree of perfection, it would be requisite to learn, from the writers of the eighteenth century, how to use our faculties to advantage; and from those of the seventeenth, how to study their source.

Descartes, Pascal, and Mallebranche, had much more resemblance to the German philosophers than the French writers of the eighteenth century; but Mallebranche and the Germans differ in this, that the one lays down as an article of faith what the others reduce into a scientific theory:—the one aims at clothing the forms inspired by his imagination in a dogmatic dress, because he is afraid of being accused of enthusiasm; while the others, writing at the end of an æra when analysis has been extended to every object of study, know that they are enthusiasts, and are solely anxious to prove that reason and enthusiasm are of one accord.

If the French had followed the metaphysical bias of their great men of the seventeenth century, they would now have entertained the same opinions as the Germans; for in the progress of philosophy Leibnitz is the natural successor of Descartes and Mallebranche, and Kant of Leibnitz.

England had great influence over the writers of the eighteenth century; the admiration which they felt for that country inspired them with the wish of introducing into France her liberty and her philosophy. Eng-

lish philosophy was then only void of danger when united with the religious sentiments of that people, with their liberty, and with their obedience to the laws. In the bosom of a nation where Newton and Clarke never pronounced the name of God without bowing their heads, let the metaphysical systems have been ever so erroneous, they could not be fatal. That which is every way wanting in France, is the feeling and habit of veneration; and the transition is there very quick from the examination which may enlighten, to the irony which reduces every thing to dust.

It seems to me that we may observe two perfectly distinct epochs in the eighteenth century; that in which the influence of England was first acknowledged, and that in which the men of genius hurried themselves into destruction: light was then changed to conflagration; and Philosophy, like an enraged enchantress, set fire to the palace where she had displayed her wonders.

In politics, Montesquieu belongs to the first epoch, Raynal to the second: in religion, the writings of Voltaire, which had the defence of toleration for their object, breathed the spirit of the first half of the century; but

his pitiable and ostentatious irreligion has been the disgrace of the second. Finally, in metaphysics, Condillac and Helvetius, although they were contemporaries, both carry about them the impression of these very different æras; for, although the entire system of the philosophy of sensation was wrong in its principle, yet the consequences which Helvetius has drawn from it ought not to be imputed to Condillac; he was far from assenting to them.

Condillac has rendered experimental metaphysics more clear and more striking than they are in Locke: he has truly levelled them to the comprehension of all the world: he says, with Locke, that the soul can have no idea which does not come in from sensation; he attributes to our wants the origin of knowledge and of language; to words, that of reflection: and thus, making us receive the entire developement of our moral being from external objects, he explains human nature as he would a positive science, in a clear, rapid, and, in some respects, convincing manner; for if we neither felt in our hearts the native impulses of belief, nor a conscience independent of experience, nor a creating spirit, in all the force of the term,

we might be well enough contented with this mechanical definition of the human soul. It is natural to be seduced by the easy solution of the greatest of problems; but this apparent simplicity exists only in the mode of inquiry; the object to which it is pretendingly applied does not the less continue of an unknown immensity; and the ænigma of ourselves swallows up, like the sphinx, thousands of systems which pretend to the glory of having guessed its meaning.

The work of Condillac ought only to be considered as another book on an inexhaustible subject, if the influence of this book had not been fatal. Helvetius, who deduces from the philosophy of sensations all the direct consequences which it can admit, asserts, that if the hands of man had been made like the hoofs of the horse, he would only have possessed the intelligence of this animal. Assuredly, if the case was so, it would be very unjust to attribute to ourselves any thing blameable or meritorious in our actions; for the difference which may exist between the several organizations of individuals, would authorize and be the proper cause of the difference in their characters.

To the opinions of Helvetius succeeded

those of the System of Nature, which tended to the annihilation of the Deity in the universe, and of free will in man. Locke, Condillac, Helvetius, and the unhappy author of the System of Nature, have all progressively advanced in the same path: the first steps were innocent; neither Locke nor Condillac knew the dangers of their philosophy; but very soon this black spot, which was hardly visible in the intellectual horizon, grew to such a size as to be near plunging the universe and man back again into darkness.

External objects, it was said, are the cause of all our impressions; nothing then appears more agreeable than to give ourselves up to the physical world, and to come, self-invited guests, to the banquet of nature; but by degrees the internal source is dried up, and even as to the imagination that is requisite for luxury and pleasure, it goes on decaying to such a degree, that very shortly man will not retain soul enough to relish any enjoyment, of however material a nature.

The immortality of the soul, and the sentiment of duty, are suppositions entirely gratuitous in the system which grounds all our ideas upon our sensations: for no sensation reveals to us immortality in death. If

external objects alone have formed our conscience, from the nurse who receives us in her arms until the last act of an advanced old age, all our impressions are so linked to each other, that we cannot arraign with justice the pretended power of volition, which is only another instance of fatality.

I shall endeavour to show, in the second part of this section, that the moral system, which is built upon interest, so strenuously preached up by the French writers of the last age, has an intimate connexion with that species of metaphysics which attributes all our ideas to our sensations, and that the consequences of the one are as bad in practice, as those of the other in theory. Those who have been able to read the licentious works published in France towards the close of the eighteenth century, will bear witness, that when the writers of these culpable performances attempt to support themselves upon any species of reasoning, they all appeal to the influence of our physical over our moral constitution; they refer to our sensations for the origin of every the most blameable opinion; they exhibit, in short, under all appearances, the doctrine which destroys free will and conscience.

We cannot deny, it may be said, that this is a degrading doctrine; but, nevertheless, if it be true, must we reject it, and blind ourselves on purpose?——Assuredly those writers would have made a deplorable discovery, who had dethroned the soul, and condemned the mind to sacrifice herself, by employing all her faculties to prove, that the laws which are common to every physical existence agree also to her—but, thanks be to God (and this expression is here in its peculiar place), thanks be to God, I say, this system is entirely false in its principle; and the circumstance of those writers espousing it who have supported the cause of immorality, is an additional proof of the errors which it contains.

If the greater part of the profligate have upheld themselves by the doctrine of materialism, when they have wished to become degraded according to method, and to form a theory of their actions, it is because they believed that, by submitting the soul to sensation, they would thus be delivered from the responsibility of their conduct. A virtuous being, convinced of this doctrine, would be deeply afflicted by it; for he would incessantly fear that the all-powerful influence of

external objects would change the purity of his soul, and the force of his resolutions. But when we see men rejoicing to proclaim themselves the creatures of circumstances in all respects, and declaring that all these circumstances are combined by chance, we shudder from our very hearts at their perverse satisfaction.

When the savage sets fire to a cottage, he is said to warm himself with pleasure at the conflagration which he has kindled; he exercises at least a sort of superiority over the disorder of which he is guilty; he makes destruction of some use to him: but when man chooses to degrade human nature, who will thus be profited?

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Ridicule introduced by a certain Species of Philosophy.

THE philosophical system, adopted in any country, exerts a great influence over the direction of mind; it is the universal model after which all thought is cast;—those persons even, who have not studied the system, conform, unknowingly, to the general disposition which it inspires. We have seen for nearly a hundred years past, in Europe, the growth and increase of a sort of scoffing scepticism, the foundation of which is the species of metaphysics that attributes all our ideas to our sensations. The first principle in this philosophy is, not to believe any thing which cannot be proved like a fact or a calculation: in union with this principle is contempt for all that bears the name of exalted sentiment; and attachment to the pleasures of sense. These three points of the doctrine include all the sorts of irony, of which religion, sensibility, and morals, can become the object.

Bayle, whose learned Dictionary is hardly read by people of the world, is nevertheless the arsenal from which all the pleasantries of scepticism have been drawn; Voltaire has given them a pungency by his wit and elegance; but the foundation of all this jesting is, that every thing, not as evident as a physical experiment, ought to be reckoned in the number of dreams and idle thoughts. It is good management to dignify an incapacity for attention by calling it a supreme sort of reason, which rejects all doubt and obscurity;—in consequence, they turn the noblest thoughts into ridicule, if reflection is necessary to comprehend them, or a sincere examination of the heart to make them felt. We still speak with respect of Pascal, of Bossuet, of J. J. Rousseau, &c.; because authority has consecrated them, and authority, of every sort, is a thing easily discerned.

But a great number of readers being convinced that ignorance and idleness are the attributes of a man of wit, think it beneath them to take any trouble, and wish to read, like a paragraph in a newspaper, writings that have man and nature for their subject.

In a word, if by chance such writings were composed by a German, whose name was not a French one, and it was as difficult to pronounce this name as that of the Baron in Candide, what collections of pleasantries would not be formed upon this circumstance! and the meaning of them all would be the following: "I have grace and lightness of "spirit; while you, who have the misfor- "tune to think upon some subjects, and to "hold by some sentiments, you do not jest "upon all with nearly the same elegance "and facility."

The philosophy of sensation is one of the principal causes of this frivolity. Since the time that the soul has been considered passive, a great number of philosophical labours have been despised.

The day on which it was said, there are no mysteries in the world, or at all events it is unnecessary to think about them; all our ideas come by the eyes and by the ears, and the palpable only is the true;—on that day the individuals who enjoyed all their senses in perfect health believed themselves the genuine philosophers. We hear it incessantly said, by those who have ideas enough to get money when they are poor,

and to spend it when they are rich, that they only possess a reasonable philosophy, and that none but enthusiasts would dream of any other. In effect, our sensations teach this philosophy alone; and if we can gain no knowledge except by their means, every thing that is not subject to the evidence of matter must bear the name of folly.

If it was admitted, on the contrary, that the soul acts by itself, and that we must draw up information out of ourselves to find the truth, and that this truth cannot be seized upon, except by the aid of profound meditation, because it is not within the range of terrestrial experience; the whole course of men's minds would be changed; they would not disdainfully reject the most sublime thoughts, because they demand a close attention; but that which they found insupportable would be the superficial and the common; for emptiness grows at length singularly burthensome.

Voltaire so well perceived the influence that metaphysics exercise over the general bias of the mind, that he wrote Candide, to combat Leibnitz. He took up a curious whim against final causes, optimism, free-will; in short, against all the philosophical

opinions that exalt the dignity of man; and he composed Candide, that effort of a diabolical gaiety; for it appears to be written by a being of a different nature from ourselves, insensible to our condition, well pleased with our sufferings, and laughing, like a dæmon or an ape, at the miseries of that human species, with which he has nothing in common.

The greatest poet of the age, the author of Alzire, Tancrède, Merope, Zaïre, and Brutus, showed himself in this work ignorant of all the great moral truths, which he had so worthily celebrated.

When Voltaire, as a tragic author, felt and thought in the character of another, he was admirable; but, when he remains wholly himself, he is a jester and a cynic. The same versatility, which enabled him to adopt the part of the personages whom he wished to represent, only too well inspired the language which, in certain moments, was suited to Voltaire.

Candide brings into action that scoffing philosophy, so indulgent in appearance, in reality so ferocious; it presents human nature under the most lamentable point of view, and offers us, in the room of every

consolation, the sardonic grin, which frees us from all compassion for others, by making us renounce it for ourselves.

It is in consequence of this system that Voltaire, in his Universal History, has aimed at attributing virtuous actions, as well as great crimes, to those accidental events which deprive the former of all their merit, and the latter of all their guilt.

In effect, if there is nothing in the soul but what our sensations have imprinted upon it, we ought no longer to recognise more than two real and lasting motives on earth—strength applied to the agent, and the desire of well-being; in other words, the law of tactics, and the law of appetite: but if the mind is still to be considered such as it has been formed by modern philosophy, it would very soon be reduced to wish that something of an exalted nature would re-appear, in order at least to furnish it with an object for exercise and for attack.

The Stoics have often repeated that we ought to brave all the assaults of fortune, and only to trouble ourselves with what depends upon the soul, upon our sentiments and our thoughts. The philosophy of sensation would have a totally opposite result: it

would disembarrass us from our feelings and thoughts, with the design of turning our efforts towards our physical well-being: she would say to us—"Attach yourselves to "the present moment; consider as a chimera "every thing which wanders out of the "circle of the pleasures and affairs of this "world, and pass your short career of life, "as well as you may, taking care of your "health, which is the foundation of happi-"ness." These maxims have been known in all times; but they were thought to be the exclusive property of valets in comedies; and in our days they have been made the doctrine of reason, founded upon necessity; a doctrine very different from that of religious resignation, for the one is as vulgar as the other is noble and exalted.

The singularity of the attempt consists in deducing the theory of elegance from so plebeian a philosophy;—our poor nature is often low and selfish, as we must grieve to confess; but it was novel enough to boast of it. Indifference and contempt for exalted subjects are become the type of the graceful; and witticisms have been levelled against those who take a lively interest in any thing, which is without a positive result in the present world.

The argumentative principle of this frivolity of heart and mind, is the metaphysical doctrine which refers all our ideas to our sensations; for nothing but the superficial comes to us from without, and the seriousness of life dwells at the bottom of the soul. If the fatality of materialism, admitted as a theory of the human mind, led to a distaste for every thing external, as well as to a disbelief of all within us; there would still be something in this system of an inactive nobleness, of an oriental indolence, which might lay claim to a sort of grandeur;—and some of the Greek philosophers have found means to infuse almost a dignity into apathy; but the empire of sensation, while it has weakened sentiment by degrees, has left the activity of personal interest in full force; and this spring of action has become so much the more powerful, as all the others have been broken into pieces. To incredulity of mind, to selfishness of heart, must still be added the doctrine concerning conscience, which Helvetius developed, when he asserted, that actions virtuous in themselves had for their object the attainment of those physical enjoyments which we can taste here below: it has followed

from hence, that sacrifices made to the ideal worship of any opinion, or any sentiment whatever, have been considered as if those who offer them were dupes; and as men dread nothing more than passing for dupes, they have been eager to cast ridicule upon every sort of unsuccessful enthusiasm; for that which has been recompensed with good fortune, has escaped raillery: success is always in the right with the advocates of materialism.

The dogmatic incredulity, that, namely, which calls in question the truth of every thing that is not proved by the senses, is the source of the chief irony of man against himself: all moral degradation comes from that quarter.——That philosophy, doubtless, ought to be considered an effect, as well as a cause, of the present state of public feeling; nevertheless, there is an evil of which it is the principal author; it has given to the carelessness of levity the appearance of reflective reasoning; it has furnished selfishness with specious arguments; and has made the most noble sentiments be considered as an accidental malady, caused by external circumstances alone.

It is of consequence then to examine whe-

ther the nation, which has constantly guarded itself against the metaphysical system, from which such inferences have been drawn, was not right in its principle, and still more so in the application which it has made of that principle, to the developement of the faculties of man, and to his moral conduct.

CHAPTER V.

General Observations upon German Philosophy.

SPECULATIVE philosophy has always found numerous partisans among the German nations, and experimental philosophy among those of Latin extraction. The Romans, expert as they were in the affairs of life, were no metaphysicians; they knew nothing of this subject, except by their connexion with Greece; and the nations civilized by them, have, for the most part, inherited their knowledge in politics, and their indifference for those studies which cannot be applied to the business of the world. This disposition shows itself in France in its greatest strength; the Italians and the Spaniards have partaken of it; but the imagination of the South has sometimes deviated from practical reason, to employ itself in theories purely abstract.

The greatness of soul that appeared among the Romans, gave a sublime character to their patriotism and their morals; but this consequence must be attributed to their republican institutions. When liberty no longer existed in Rome, a selfish and sensual luxury was seen to reign there, with almost an undivided empire; excepting that of an adroit sort of political knowledge, which directed every mind towards observation and experience. The Romans retained nothing of their past study of Grecian literature and philosophy but a taste for the arts; and this taste itself very soon degenerated into gross enjoyments.

The influence of Rome did not exert itself over the northern nations. They were almost entirely civilized by Christianity;—and their ancient religion, which contained within it the principles of chivalry, bore no resemblance to the Paganism of the South. There was to be found a spirit of heroical and generous self-devotion; an enthusiasm for women, which made a noble worship of love; in a word, as the rigours of the climate prevented man from plunging himself into the delights of nature, he had so much the keener relish for the pleasures of the soul

It may be objected to me, that the Greeks had the same religion and the same climate as the Romans; and that yet they have given themselves up more than any other people to speculative philosophy; but may we not attribute to the Indians some of the intellectual systems developed among the Greeks? The ideal philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato ill agrees with Paganism, such as it appears to us; historical traditions also lead us to believe that Egypt was the medium through which the nations of southern Europe received the influence of the East. The philosophy of Epicurus is the only philosophy of truly Grecian origin.

Whatever may become of these conjectures, it is certain that the spirituality of the soul, and all the thoughts derived from it, have been easily naturalized among the people of the North; and of all these nations, the Germans have ever showed themselves the most inclined to contemplative philosophy. Leibnitz is their Bacon and their Descartes. We find in this excellent genius all the qualities which the German philosophers in general glory to aim at: immense erudition, perfect good faith, enthusiasm hidden under strict form and method. He

had profoundly studied theology, jurisprudence, history, languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry; for he was convinced that an universality of knowledge was necessary to constitute a superior being in any department: in short, every thing in Leibnitz displayed those virtues which are allied to sublimity of thought, and which deserve at once our admiration and our respect.

His works may be divided into three branches—the exact sciences, theological philosophy, and the philosophy of the mind. Every one knows that Leibnitz was the rival of Newton, in the theory of calculation.

The knowledge of mathematics is very useful in metaphysical studies; abstract reasoning does not exist in perfection out of algebra and geometry; I shall endeavour to show in another place the unsuitableness of this sort of reasoning, when we attempt to exercise it upon a subject that is allied in any manner to sensibility; but it confers upon the human mind a power of attention, that renders it much more capable of analysing itself: we must also know the laws and the forces of the universe, to study man under all his relations. There is such an

analogy, and such a difference, between the physical and the moral world, their resemblances and their diversity lend each other such light, that it is impossible to be a learned man of the first rank without the assistance of speculative philosophy, nor a speculative philosopher without having studied the positive sciences.

Locke and Condillac had not sufficiently attended to these sciences; but Leibnitz had in this respect an incontestable superiority. Descartes also was a very great mathematician; and it is to be remarked, that the greater part of the advocates for the ideal philosophy have made an unbounded use of their intellectual faculties. The exercise of the mind, as well as that of the heart, imparts a feeling of internal activity, of which all those beings who abandon themselves to the impressions that come from without are rarely capable.

The first class of the writings of Leibnitz contains those which we call theological, because they are directed to truths which form part of the support of religion; and the theory of the human mind is included in the second class. In the first class he treats of the origin of good and evil—of the divine

prescience;—in a word, of those primitive questions which lie beyond the bounds of human intelligence. I do not pretend to cen-

by this expression, those great men who, from the times of Pythagoras and Plato down to our own, have been attracted towards these lofty philosophical speculations. Genius does not set bounds to itself, until it has struggled for a long time against that hard necessity. Who can possess the faculty of thinking, and not endeavour to learn the origin and the end of the things of this world?

Every thing that lives upon earth, excepting man, seems to be ignorant of itself. He alone knows that he will die, and this awful truth awakens his interest for all the grand thoughts which are attached to it. From the time that we are capable of reflection we resolve, or rather we think we resolve, after our own manner, the philosophical questions which may explain the destiny of man; but it has been granted to no one to comprehend that destiny altogether. Every man views it from a different point; every man has his own philosophy, his poetry, his love. This philosophy is in accord with the peculiar bias of his character and his mind. When we raise ourselves towards infinity, a thou-

sandy explanations may be equally true although different; for questions without bounds have thousands of aspects, one of which may be sufficient to occupy the whole duration of existence.

If the mystery of the universe is above the understanding of man, still the study of this mystery gives more expansion to the mind. It is in metaphysics as it is in alchemy: in searching for the philosopher's stone, in endeavouring to discover an impossibility, we meet upon the road with truths which would have remained unknown to us: besides, we cannot hinder a meditative being from bestowing some time at least upon the transcendent philosophy; this ebullition of spiritual nature cannot be kept back, without bringing that nature into disgrace.

The pre-established harmony of Leibnitz, which he believed to be a great discovery, has been refuted with success; he flattered himself that he could explain the relations between mind and matter, by considering them both as instruments tuned beforehand, which re-echo, and answer, and imitate each other mutually. His monads, of which he constitutes the simple elements of the universe, are but an hypothesis as gratuitous

as all those which have been used to explain the origin of things. But in what a singular state of perplexity is the human mind! Incessantly attracted towards the secret of its being, it finds that secret equally impossible to be discovered, or to be banished from its thoughts.

The Persians say, that Zoroaster interrogated the Deity, and asked how the world had begun, when it would end, what was the origin of good and evil? The Deity answered to all these questions—"*Do what is "good, and gain immortality.*" The point which particularly constitutes the excellence of this reply, is this—that it does not discourage man from the most sublime meditations; it only teaches him, that by conscience and sentiment he may exalt himself to the most lofty conceptions of philosophy.

Leibnitz was an idealist, who founded his system solely upon reasoning; and from thence it arises, that he has pushed his abstractions too far, and that he has not sufficiently supported his theory upon inward persuasion—the only true foundation of that which is above the understanding: in short, reason upon the liberty of man, and you will not believe it; lay your hand upon your

conscience, and you will not be able to doubt it. Consequence and contradiction, in the sense that we attach to either of these terms, do not exist within the sphere of the great questions concerning the liberty of man, the origin of good and evil, the divine prescience, &c. In these questions sentiment is almost always in opposition to reason; in order to teach mankind, that what he calls incredible in the order of earthly things, is perhaps the supreme truth under universal relations.

Dante has expressed a grand philosophical thought by this verse:—

A guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede*

We must believe certain truths as we believe our own existence; it is the soul which reveals them to us; and reasonings of every kind are never more than feeble streams derived from this fountain.

The Theodicea of Leibnitz treats of the divine prescience, and of the cause of good and evil: it is one of the most profound and argumentative works upon the theory of the infinite; the author, however, too often applies to that which is without bounds, a sort

* "It is thus that man believes in primitive truth."

of logic to which circumscribed objects alone are amenable. Leibnitz was a perfectly religious character; but, from this very circumstance, he believed it a duty to ground the truths of religion upon mathematical reasoning, in order to support them on such foundations as are admitted within the empire of experience: this error proceeds from a respect, oftener felt than acknowledged, for men of cold and arid minds; we attempt to convince them in their own manner; we acknowledge that arguments in a logical form have more certainty than a proof from sentiment; and it is not true.

In the region of intellectual and religious truths, of which Leibnitz has treated, we must use consciousness in the room of demonstration. Leibnitz, wishing to adhere to abstract reasoning, demands a sort of stretch of attention which few minds can support. Metaphysical works, that are founded neither upon experience nor upon sentiment, singularly fatigue the thinking power; and we may imbibe from them a physical and moral pain, so great, that by our obstinate endeavours to conquer it, we may shatter the organs of reason in our heads. A poet, Baggesen, has made Vertigo a divinity—we

should recommend ourselves to the favour of that goddess, when we are about to study these works, which place us in such a manner at the summit of ideas, that we have no longer any ladder-steps to re-descend into life.

The metaphysical and religious writers, who are eloquent and feeling at the same time (such as we have seen in some examples), are much better adapted to our nature. Far from requiring the suppression of our faculties of feeling, in order to make our faculty of abstraction more precise, they bid us think, feel, and wish, that all the strength of our souls may aid us to penetrate into the depths of heaven; but to cling close to abstraction is such an effort, that it is natural enough for the generality of men to have renounced the attempt, and to have thought it more easy to admit nothing beyond what is visible.

The experimental philosophy is complete in itself; it is a whole, sufficiently vulgar, but compact, circumscribed, argumentative; and while we adhere to the sort of reasoning which is received in the commerce of the world, we ought to be contented with it; the immortal and the infinite are only felt

through the medium of the soul; the soul alone can diffuse an interest over the higher sort of metaphysics. We are very wrong to persuade ourselves that the more abstract a theory is, the more likely it is to guard us against all illusion; for it is exactly by these means that it may lead us into error. We take the connexion of ideas for their proof; we arrange our rank and file of chimeras with precision; and we fancy that they are an army. There is nothing but the genius of sentiment that arises above experimental, as well as above speculative philosophy; there is no other genius but that, which can carry conviction beyond the limits of human reason.

It appears then to me, that, notwithstanding my entire admiration for the strength of mind and depth of genius in Leibnitz, we should wish, in his writings upon questions of metaphysical theology, more imagination and sensibility; that we might repose from thought by the indulgence of our feelings. Leibnitz almost made a scruple of recurring to it, fearing that he should have the appearance of using seductive arts in favour of the truth: he was wrong; for sentiment is truth itself in questions of this nature.

The objections which I have allowed myself to make to those works of Leibnitz, which aim at the solution of truths insoluble by reasoning, do not at all apply to his writings on the formation of ideas in the human mind; those writings are of a most luminous clearness; they refer to a mystery which man, to a certain degree, can penetrate; for he knows more of himself than of the universe. The opinions of Leibnitz in this respect tend, above all, to our moral perfection, if it be true, as the German philosophers have attempted to prove, that free-will rests upon the doctrine which delivers the soul from external objects, and that virtue cannot exist without the perfect independence of the will.

Leibnitz has opposed, with admirable force of logical reasoning, the system of Locke, who attributes all our ideas to our sensations. The advocates of this system had vaunted of that well-known axiom, that there is nothing in the intellect which has not first been in the senses; and Leibnitz added to it this sublime restriction—"Except the intellect "itself *." From this principle all the new philosophy is derived, which so much influ-

* Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu, nisi intellectus ipse.

ences the men of genius in Germany. This philosophy also is experimental; for it endeavours to learn what is passing within ourselves. It only substitutes the observation of internal feeling for that of our external sensations.

The doctrine of Locke gained many partisans in Germany among those who endeavoured, like Bonnet at Geneva, and many other philosophers in England, to reconcile this doctrine with the religious sentiments which Locke himself always professed. The genius of Leibnitz foresaw all the consequences of this sort of metaphysics; and that which has built his glory on an everlasting foundation, is his having maintained in Germany the philosophy of moral liberty against that of sensual fatalism. While the rest of Europe adopted those principles which make the soul be considered as passive, Leibnitz, with unshaken constancy, was the defender of the ideal philosophy, such as his genius had conceived it. It had no connexion with the system of Berkeley; nor with the reveries of the Greek sceptics upon the non-existence of matter; but it maintained the moral being in his independence and in his rights.

CHAPTER VI.

Kant.

KANT lived even to a very advanced age, and never quitted Königsberg;—there, in the midst of northern ice, he passed his whole life in meditation upon the laws of human intelligence. An indefatigable ardour for study enabled him to acquire stores of knowledge without number. Sciences, languages, literature, all were familiar to him; and without seeking for glory, which he did not enjoy till a very late period (not having heard the noise of his renown before his old age), he contented himself with the silent pleasure of reflection. In solitude he contemplated his mind with close attention; the examination of his thoughts lent him new strength to support his virtue; and although he never intermeddled with the ardent passions of men, he knew how to forge arms for those who should be summoned to combat those passions.

Except among the Greeks, we have hardly any example of a life so strictly philosophi-

cal; and that life itself answers for the sincerity of the writer. To such an unstained sincerity, we must further add an acute and exact understanding, which served for a corrector to his genius, when he suffered it to carry him too far. This is enough, it seems to me, to make us judge at least impartially of the persevering labours of such a man.

Kant first published several works on the natural sciences; and he showed, in this branch of study, so great a sagacity, that it was he who first foresaw the existence of the planet Uranus. Herschel himself, after having discovered it, acknowledged that it was Kant who announced the future event. His treatise upon the nature of the human understanding, entitled the "Examination of "pure Reason," appeared near thirty years ago, and this work was for some time unknown; but when at length the treasures of thought, which it contains, were discovered, it produced such a sensation in Germany, that almost all which has been accomplished since, in literature as well as in philosophy, has flowed from the impulse given by this performance.

To this treatise upon the human understanding succeeded the "Examination of "practical Reason," which related to morals; and the "Examination of Judgment," which had the nature of the beautiful for its object. The same theory serves for a foundation to these three treatises, which embrace the laws of intellect, the principles of virtue, and the contemplation of the beauties of nature and of the arts.

I shall endeavour to give a sketch of the principal ideas which this doctrine contains; —whatever care I may take to explain it clearly, I do not dissemble the necessity there is of incessant attention to comprehend it. A prince, who was learning mathematics, grew impatient of the labour which that study demanded. "It is indipensable," said his instructor, "for your highness to "take the pains of studying, in order to "learn the science; for there is no royal "road in mathematics." The French public, which has so many reasons to fancy itself a prince, will allow me to suggest that there is no royal road in metaphysics; and that, to attain a conception of any theory whatever, we must pass through the inter-

mediate ways which conducted the author himself to the results he exhibits.

The philosophy of materialism gave up the human understanding to the empire of external objects, and morals to personal interest; and reduced the beautiful to the agreeable. Kant wished to re-establish primitive truths and spontaneous activity in the soul, conscience in morals, and *the ideal* in the arts. Let us now examine in what manner he has fulfilled these different undertakings.

At the time the "Examination of pure "Reason" made its appearance, there existed only two systems concerning the human understanding among thinking men: the one, that of Locke, attributed all our ideas to our sensations; the other, that of Descartes and Leibnitz, endeavoured to demonstrate the spirituality and the activity of the soul, free-will, in short, the whole doctrine of Idealism; but these two philosophers rested their opinions upon proofs purely speculative. I have exposed, in the preceding chapter, the inconveniences which result from these efforts of abstraction, that arrest, if we may use the expression, the very blood in our veins, until our intellectual

faculties alone reign within us. The algebraic method, applied to objects that we cannot embrace by mere reasoning, leaves no durable trace in the mind. While we are in the act of perusing these writings upon high philosophical conceptions, we believe that we comprehend them; we think that we believe them; but the arguments which have appeared most convincing, very soon escape from the memory.

If man, wearied with these efforts, confines himself to the knowledge which he gains by his senses, all will be melancholy indeed for his soul. Will he have any idea of immortality, when the forerunners of destruction are engraven so deeply on the countenance of mortals, and living nature falls incessantly into dust? When all the senses talk of death, what feeble hope can we entertain of a resurrection? If man only consulted his sensations, what idea would he form of the supreme goodness? So many afflictions dispute the mastery over our life; so many hideous objects disfigure nature, that the unfortunate created being curses his existence a thousand times before the last convulsion snatches it away. Let man, on the contrary, reject the testimony of his

senses, how will he guide himself on the earth? and yet, if he trusts to them alone, what enthusiasm, what morals, what religion will be able to resist the repeated assaults to which pain and pleasure alternately expose him?.

Reflection wandered over this vast region of uncertainty, when Kant endeavoured to trace the limits of the two empires, that of the senses and that of the soul; of external and of intellectual nature. The strength of thinking, and the wisdom with which he marked these limits, were perhaps never exhibited before: he did not lose himself among the new systems concerning the creation of the universe; he recognised the bounds which the eternal mysteries set to the human understanding, and (what will be new perhaps to those who have only heard Kant spoken of) there is no philosopher more adverse, in numerous respects, to metaphysics; he made himself so deeply learned in this science, only to employ against it the means it afforded him to demonstrate its own insufficiency. We might say of him, that, like a new Curtius, he threw himself into the gulf of abstraction, in order to fill it up.

Locke had victoriously combated the doctrine of innate ideas in man; because he has always represented ideas as making a part of our experimental knowledge. The examination of pure reason, that is to say of the primitive faculties of which the intellect is composed, did not fix his attention. Leibnitz, as we have said above, pronounced this sublime axiom:—"There is nothing "in the intellect which does not come by "the senses, except the intellect itself." Kant has acknowledged, as well as Locke, that there are no innate ideas; but he has endeavoured to enter into the sense of the above axiom, by examining what are the laws and the sentiments which constitute the essence of the human soul, independently of all experience. The "Examination of pure "Reason" strives to show in what these laws consist, and what are the objects upon which they can be exercised.

Scepticism, to which materialism almost always leads, was carried so far, that Hume finished by overturning the foundation of all reasoning, in his search after arguments against the axiom, "that there is no effect "without a cause." And such is the unsteadiness of human nature when we do not

place the principle of conviction in the centre of the soul, that incredulity, which begins by attacking the existence of the moral world, at last gets rid of the material world also, which it first used as an instrument to destroy the other.

Kant wished to know whether absolute certainty was attainable by the human understanding; and he only found it in our necessary notions—that is to say, in all the laws of our understanding, which are of such a nature that we cannot conceive any thing otherwise than as those laws represent it.

In the first class of the imperative forms of our understanding are space and time. Kant demonstrates that all our perceptions are submitted to these two forms; he concludes, from hence, that they exist in us, and not in objects; and that, in this respect, it is our understanding which gives laws to external nature, instead of receiving them from it. Geometry, which measures space, and arithmetic, which divides time, are sciences of perfect demonstration, because they rest upon the necessary notions of our understanding.

Truths acquired by experience never carry absolute certainty with them: when we say,

"the sun rises every day,"—"all men are "mortal," &c. the imagination could figure an exception to these truths, which experience alone makes us consider indubitable; but Imagination herself cannot suppose any thing out of the sphere of space and time; and it is impossible to regard as the result of custom (that is to say, of the constant repetition of the same phænomena) those forms of our thought which we impose upon things: sensations may be doubtful; but the prism through which we receive them is immoveable.

To this primitive intuition of space and time, we must add, or rather give, as a foundation, the principles of reasoning, without which we cannot comprehend any thing, and which are the laws of our understanding; the connexion of causes and effects—unity, plurality, totality, possibility, reality, necessity, &c.*. Kant considers them all as equally necessary notions; and he only raises to the rank of real sciences such as are immediately founded upon these notions, because it is in them alone that certainty can

* Kant gives the name of *Category* to the different necessary notions of the understanding, of which he gives a list.

exist. The forms of reasoning have no result, excepting when they are applied to our judgment of external objects, and in this application they are liable to error; but they are not the less necessary in themselves;—that is to say, we cannot depart from them in any of our thoughts: it is impossible for us to figure any thing out of the sphere of the relations of causes and effects, of possibility, quantity, &c.; and these notions are as inherent in our conception as space and time. We perceive nothing excepting through the medium of the immoveable laws of our manner of reasoning; therefore these laws also are placed within ourselves, and not without us.

In the German philosophy, those ideas are called *subjective*, which grow out of the nature of our understanding and its faculties; and all those ideas *objective*, which are excited by sensations. Whatever may be the denomination which we adopt in this respect, it appears to me that the examination of our intellect agrees with the prevailing thought of Kant; namely, the distinction he establishes between the forms of our understanding and the objects which we know according to those forms; and whether

he adheres to abstract conceptions, or whether he appeals, in religion and morals, to sentiments which he also considers as independent of experience, nothing is more luminous than the line of demarcation which he traces between what comes to us by sensation, and what belongs to the spontaneous action of our souls.

Some expressions in the doctrine of Kant having been ill interpreted, it has been pretended that he believed in that doctrine of innate ideas, which describes them as engraved upon the soul before we have discovered them. Other German philosophers, more allied to the system of Plato, have, in effect, thought that the type of the world was in the human understanding, and that man could not conceive the universe if he had not in himself the innate image of it; but this doctrine is not touched upon by Kant: he reduces the intellectual sciences to three—logic, metaphysics, and mathematics. Logic teaches nothing by itself; but as it rests upon the laws of our understanding, it is incontestable in its principles, abstractedly considered: this science cannot lead to truth, excepting in its application to ideas and things; its principles are innate, its applica-

tion is experimental. In metaphysics, Kant denies its existence; because he pretends that reasoning cannot find a place beyond the sphere of experience. Mathematics alone appear to him to depend immediately upon the notion of space and of time—that is to say, upon the laws of our understanding anterior to experience. He endeavours to prove, that mathematics are not a simple analysis, but a synthetic, positive, creative science, and certain of itself, without the necessity of our recurring to experience to be assured of its truth. We may study in the work of Kant the arguments upon which he supports this way of thinking; but at least it is true, that there is no man more adverse to what is called the philosophy of the dreamers; and that he must rather have had an inclination for a dry and didactic mode of thinking, although the object of his doctrine be to raise the human species from its degradation, under the philosophy of materialism.

Far from rejecting experience, Kant considers the business of life as nothing but the action of our innate faculties upon the several sorts of knowledge which come to us from without. He believed that experience would be nothing but a chaos without the

laws of the understanding; but that the laws of the understanding have no other object than the elements of thought afforded it by experience. It follows, that metaphysics themselves can teach us nothing beyond these limits; and that it is to sentiment that we ought to attribute the foreknowledge and the conviction of every thing that transcends the bounds of the visible world.

When it is attempted to use reasoning alone for the establishment of religious truths, it becomes a most pliable instrument, which can equally attack and defend them; because we cannot, on this occasion, find any point of support in experience. Kant places upon two parallel lines the arguments for and against the liberty of man, the immortality of the soul, the temporary or eternal duration of the world; and it is to sentiment that he appeals to weigh down the balance, for the metaphysical proofs appear to him of equal strength on either side*. Perhaps he was wrong to push the scepticism of reasoning to such an extent; but it was to annihilate this scepticism with more certainty, by keeping certain questions clear from the abstract discussions which gave it birth.

* These opposite arguments on great metaphysical questions are called "Antinomies" in Kant's writings.

It would be unjust to suspect the sincere piety of Kant, because he has maintained the equality of the reasonings for and against the great questions in the transcendental metaphysics. It appears to me, on the contrary, that there is candour in this avowal. Such few minds are able to comprehend these reasonings, and those who are able are so disposed to combat each other, that it is rendering a great service to religious faith to banish metaphysics from all questions that relate to the existence of God, to free-will, to the origin of good and evil.

Some respectable persons have said, that we ought not to neglect any weapon, and that metaphysical arguments also ought to be employed, to persuade those over whom they have power; but these arguments lead to discussion, and discussion to doubt upon every subject.

The best æras for the race of man have ever been those, when truths of a certain class were uncontested in writing or discourse. The passions might then seduce into culpable acts; but no one called in question the truth of that religion which he disobeyed. Sophisms of every kind, the abuses of a certain philosophy, have de-

stroyed, in different countries and different ages, that noble firmness of belief, which was the source of the devotion of heroes. Then is it not a fine idea, for a philosopher to shut, even to the science which he professes, the door of the sanctuary, and to employ all the power of abstraction to prove, that there are regions from which it ought to be banished?

Despots and fanatics have endeavoured to prevent human reason from examining certain subjects, and Reason has ever burst these unjust fetters. But the limits which she imposes on herself, far from enslaving her, give her a new strength—such strength as always results from the authority of laws, which are freely agreed to by those who are subjected to them.

A deaf and dumb person, before he had been under the discipline of the Abbé Sicard; might feel a full conviction of the existence of the Divinity. Many men are as far removed from those who think deeply, as the deaf and dumb are from other men, and still they are not less capable of experiencing (if the expression may be allowed) within themselves primitive truths, because such truths spring from sentiment.

Physicians, in the physical study of man, recognise the principle which animates him, and yet no one knows what life is; and if one set about reasoning, it would be easy to prove to men (as several Greek philosophers have done), that they do not live at all. It is the same with God, with conscience, and with free-will. You must believe, because you feel: all argument will be inferior to this fact.

The labours of anatomy cannot be practised on a living body without destroying it; analysis, when attempted to be applied to indivisible truths, destroys them, because its first efforts are directed against their unity. We must divide our souls in two, in order that one half of us may contemplate the other. In whatever way this division takes place, it deprives our being of that sublime identity, without which we have not sufficient strength to believe that of which consciousness alone offers us assurance.

Let a great number of men be assembled at a theatre or public place, and let some theorem of reasoning, however general, be proposed to them;—as many different opinions will immediately be formed as there are individuals assembled. But, if any actions,

displaying greatness of soul, are related, or the accents of generosity heard, the general burst will at once proclaim, that you have touched that instinct of the soul which is as lively and as powerful in our beings, as the instinct which preserves our existence.

In referring to sentiment, which does not admit of doubts, the knowledge of transcendent truths, in endeavouring to prove that reasoning avails only when exerted within the sphere of sensations, Kant is very far from considering this faculty of sentiment as an illusion; on the contrary, he assigns to it the first rank in human nature; he makes conscience the innate principle of our moral existence; and the feeling of right and wrong is, according to his ideas, the primitive law of the heart, as space and time are of the understanding.

Has not man been led by reasoning to deny the existence of free-will? and yet he is so convinced of it, that he surprises himself in the act of feeling esteem or dislike even for the animals that surround him; so forcibly does he believe in the spontaneous choice of good and evil in all beings.

The assurance of our freedom is only the feeling we have of it; and on this liberty, as

the corner-stone, is raised the doctrine of duty; for if man is free, he ought to create to himself motives powerful enough to combat against the operation of exterior objects, and to set his will free from the narrow trammels of selfishness. Duty is at once the proof and the security of the metaphysical independence of man.

In the following chapters, we shall examine Kant's arguments against morality as founded upon self-interest, and the sublime theory which he substitutes in the place of this hypocritical sophism, or perverse doctrine. Different opinions may be entertained as to Kant's first work, "*The Examination of pure Reason:*" having himself acknowledged reasoning to be insufficient and contradictory, he ought to have anticipated that it would be made use of against him; but it appears to me impossible not to read with respect his "*Examination of practical Reason,*" and the different works that he has written on morality.

Not only are Kant's principles of morality austere and pure, as might be expected from the inflexibility of a philosopher, but he always connects the evidence of the heart with that of the understanding, and is singularly

happy in making his abstract theory, as to the nature of the understanding, serve as a support to sentiments at once the most simple and the most powerful.

A conscience acquired by sensations may be stifled by them; and the dignity of duty is degraded, in being made to depend on exterior objects. Kant, therefore, is incessantly labouring to show, that a deep sense of this dignity is the necessary condition of our moral being, the law by which it exists. The empire of sensations, and the bad actions, to the commission of which they lead, can no more destroy in us the notion of good or of evil, than the idea of space and time can be changed by an erroneous application of it. There is always, in whatever situation we may be placed, a power of re-action against circumstances, which springs from the bottom of the soul; and we cannot but feel, that neither the laws of the understanding, moral liberty, nor conscience, are the result of experience.

In his treatise on the sublime and beautiful, entitled, "*The Examination of the Judgment*," Kant applies to the pleasures of the imagination the system from which he has developed such fruitful deductions in the

sphere of intelligence and of sentiment; or rather it is the same soul which he examines, and which shows itself in the sciences, in morality, and in the fine arts. Kant maintains, that there are in poetry, and in the arts which are capable, as poetry is, of painting sentiments by images, two kinds of beauty: one which may be referred to time and to this life; the other, to eternity and infinity.

And so impossible is it to say, that what is infinite and eternal is intelligible to our minds, that one is often tempted to take even what is finite and transient for a dream; for thought can see no limits to any thing, neither can being have a conception of non-existence. We cannot search deeply into the exact sciences themselves, without meeting, even there, with what is infinite and eternal; and those things which are the most completely matters of fact, do, under some relations, belong to this infinity and eternity, as much as sentiment and imagination.

From this application of the feeling of infinity to the fine arts, arises the system of ideal beauty, that is to say, of beauty considered, not as the assemblage and imitation of whatever is most worthy in nature, but as the realization of that image which is

constantly present to the soul. Materialists judge of the beautiful according to the agreeable impression which it causes, and therefore place it in the empire of sensations: immaterialists, who ascribe every thing to reason, see in the beautiful what they call the perfect, and find in it some analogy to the useful and the good, which they consider to be the first degrees of perfection. Kant has rejected both these explanations.

Beauty, considered only as an agreeable thing, would be confined to the sphere of sensations, and consequently subject to the difference of tastes; it could never claim that universal acknowledgment, which is the true character of beauty: beauty, again, considered as perfection, would require a sort of judgment, like that on which esteem is founded: the enthusiasm that ought to be inspired by the beautiful, belongs neither to sensations nor to judgment; it is an innate disposition, like the feeling of duty, and those ideas which are essential to the understanding; and we discover beauty when we see it, because it is the outward image of that ideal beauty, the type of which exists in our mind. Difference of tastes may be applied to what is agreeable, for our sensations are the source of that kind

of pleasure; but all men must admire what is beautiful, whether in art or in nature, because they have in their souls sentiments of celestial origin, which beauty awakens, and of which it excites the enjoyment.

Kant passes from the theory of the beautiful to that of the sublime; and this second part of his "*Examination of the Judgment*" is even more remarkable than the first: he makes the sublime, in moral liberty, consist in the struggles of man with his destiny, or with his nature. Unlimited power excites our fear, greatness overwhelms us; yet, by the vigour of the will, we escape from the sensation of our physical weakness. The power of destiny, and the immensity of nature, are placed in endless opposition to the miserable dependence of the creature upon earth; but one spark of the sacred fire in our bosoms triumphs over the universe; since with that one spark we are enabled to resist the impressions which all the powers in the world could make upon us.

The first effect of the sublime is to overwhelm a man, and the second to exalt him. When we contemplate a storm curling the billows of the sea, and seeming to threaten both earth and heaven, terror at

first takes possession of us, although we may be out of the reach of any personal danger; but when the clouds, that have gathered, burst over our heads, when all the fury of nature is displayed, man feels an inward energy, which frees him from every fear, by his will, or by resignation, by the exercise, or by the relinquishment of his moral liberty; and this consciousness of what is within him animates and encourages him.

When we hear of a generous action, when we learn that men have borne unheard-of misfortunes to remain faithful to their opinion, even to the smallest swerving; at first the description of the miseries they have suffered confuses our ideas; but, by degrees, we regain our strength, and the sympathy that we feel excited within ourselves, by greatness of soul, makes us hope that we ourselves could triumph over the miserable sensations of this life to remain faithful, noble, and proud to our latest day.

Besides, no one can define, if I may so say, that which is at the summit of our existence; "*We are too much elevated in "respect to ourselves, to comprehend our-"selves,*" says St. Augustin. He must be very poor in imagination who should think

himself able to exhaust the contemplation even of the simplest flower; how then could we arrive at the knowledge of all that is comprised in the idea of the sublime?

I do not certainly flatter myself that I have been able, in a few pages, to give an account of a system which, for twenty years, has occupied all thinking heads in Germany; but I hope to have said enough to show the general spirit of the philosophy of Kant, and to enable me to explain, in the following chapters, the influence which it has had upon literature, science, and morality.

In order to reconcile experimental and ideal philosophy, Kant has not made the one subordinate to the other, but he has given to each of the two, separately, a new degree of force. Germany was threatened by that cold doctrine which regarded all enthusiasm as an error, and classed amongst prejudices those sentiments which form the consolation of our existence. It was a great satisfaction for men, at once so philosophical and so poetical, so capable of study and of exaltation, to see all the fine affections of the soul defended with the strictness of the most abstract reasonings. The force of the mind can never be long in a negative state;

that is, it cannot long consist principally, in not believing, in not understanding, and in what it disdains. We must have a philosophy of belief, of enthusiasm, a philosophy which confirms by reason, what sentiment reveals to us.

The adversaries of Kant have accused him of having merely repeated the arguments of the ancient idealists; they have pretended that the doctrine of the German philosopher was only an old system in a new language. This reproach has no foundation. There are not only new ideas, but a particular character, in the doctrine of Kant.

It savours of the philosophy of the eighteenth century, although it was intended to refute the doctrines of that philosophy, because it is natural to man always to catch the spirit of the age in which he lives, even when his intention is to oppose it. The philosophy of Plato is more poetical than that of Kant, the philosophy of Mallebranche more religious; but the great merit of the German philosopher has been to raise up moral dignity, by setting all that is fine in the heart, on the basis of a theory deduced from the strongest reasoning. The opposition which it has been endeavoured to show between

reason and sentiment, necessarily leads reason on to selfishness, and reduces sentiment to folly; but Kant, who seemed to be called to conclude all the grand intellectual alliances, has made the soul one focus, in which all our faculties are in contact with each other.

The polemical part of the works of Kant, that in which he attacks the philosophy of the materialists, would be of itself a masterpiece. That philosophy has struck its roots so deeply into the mind, so much irreligion and selfishness has been the result of it, that those men ought to be regarded as benefactors to their country, who have even combatted a system so pernicious, and revived the ideas of Plato, of Descartes, and of Leibnitz: but the philosophy of the new German school contains a crowd of ideas which are peculiar to it; it is founded upon the greatest extent of scientific knowledge, which has been increasing every day, and upon a singularly abstract and logical mode of reasoning; for, although Kant blames the use of such reasoning, in the examination of truths which are out of the circle of experience, he shows in his writings a power of mind, on metaphysical subjects, which

places him, in that respect, in the first rank of thinkers.

It cannot be denied that the style of Kant, in his "*Examination of pure Reason*," deserves almost all the reproaches with which his adversaries have treated it. He has made use of a phraseology very difficult to understand, and of the most tiresome new creation of words. He lived alone with his own thoughts, and persuaded himself that it was necessary to have new words for new ideas, and yet there are words to express every thing.

In those objects which are in themselves the most clear, Kant is frequently guided by a very obscure system of metaphysics; and it is only in those regions of thought where darkness prevails in general, that he displays the torch of light: like the Israelites, who had for their guide a column of fire by night, and a pillar of a cloud by day.

No one in France would give himself the trouble of studying works so thickly set with difficulties, as those of Kant; but he had to do with patient and persevering readers. This, certainly, was not a reason for his abusing their patience; perhaps, however, he would not have been able to

search so deeply into the science of the human understanding, if he had attached more importance to the choice of the expressions which he made use of in explaining it. The ancient philosophers always divided their doctrines into two distinct parts; one which they reserved for the initiated, and another which they professed in public. Kant's manner of writing is quite different, when his theory, or the application of it, is the subject.

In his metaphysical treatises, he makes use of words as arithmetical figures, and gives them whatever value he pleases, without troubling himself with that which they have derived from custom. This appears to me a great error; for the attention of the reader is exhausted in efforts to understand the language, before he arrives at the ideas, and what is known never serves as a step to what is unknown.

We must nevertheless give Kant the justice he deserves, even as a writer, when he lays aside his scientific language. In speaking of the arts, and still more of morality, his style is almost always perfectly clear, energetic, and simple. How admirable does his doctrine then appear! How well does

he express the sentiment of the beautiful and the love of duty! With what force does he separate them both from all calculations of interest or of utility! How he ennobles actions by their source, and not by their success! In a word, what grandeur of morality does he not give to man, whether he examines him in himself, or whether he considers him in his relations towards others;—to man, that exile of heaven, that prisoner upon earth, so great as an exile, so miserable as a captive!

We might extract from the writings of Kant a multitude of brilliant ideas on all subjects; perhaps, indeed, it is to this doctrine alone, that, at the present day, we must look for conceptions at once ingenious and new; for the notions of the materialists no longer offer, in any thing, what is interesting or original. Smartness of wit against what is serious, noble, and divine, is worn out; and in future it will be impossible to restore to the human race any of the qualities of youth, but by returning to religion by the road of philosophy, and to sentiment by the way of reason.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the most celebrated Philosophers before and after Kant.

THE spirit of philosophy, from its nature, cannot be generally diffused in any country. In Germany, however, there is such a tendency towards habits of reflection, that the German nation may be considered, by distinction, as the nation of metaphysics. It possesses so many men capable of understanding the most abstract questions, that even the public are found to take an interest in the arguments usually employed in discussions of that nature.

Every man of talent has his own way of thinking on philosophical questions. Writers of the second and third rank, in Germany, are sufficiently deep to be of the first rank in other countries. Those who are rivals, have the same hatred towards one another there as elsewhere; but no one would dare to enter the lists, without having evinced, by serious study, a real love for the science in

which he was engaged. It is not enough ardently to desire success; it must be deserved, before the candidate can be even admitted to start for it. The Germans, however indulgent they may be to defects of form in a work, are unmerciful with respect to its real value; and, when they perceive any thing superficial, in the mind, the feeling, or the knowledge of a writer, they try to borrow the very pleasantry of the French, to turn what is frivolous into ridicule.

It is my intention to give, in this chapter, a hasty glimpse of the principal opinions of the philosophers who have attracted notice before and since the time of Kant; the course which his successors have taken cannot well be judged of, without turning back to see what was the state of opinions at the time when the doctrines of *Kantism* first prevailed in Germany; it was opposed at the same time to the system of Locke, as tending to materialism, and to the school of Leibnitz, as reducing every thing to abstraction.

The ideas of Leibnitz were lofty; but his disciples, Wolf at their head, have encumbered them with forms of logic and metaphysics. Leibnitz had said, our ideas that

come by the senses are confused, and that those only which belong to the immediate perceptions of the mind are clear: without doubt his intention by that was to show, that truths, which are invisible, are more certain* and more in harmony with our moral nature, than all that we learn by the evidence of the senses. Wolf and his disciples have drawn this consequence from it, that every thing, about which our mind can be employed, must be reduced into abstract ideas. Kant inspired interest and warmth into this lifeless idealism; he assigned to experience, as well as to the innate faculties, its just proportion; and the art with which he applied his theory to every thing that is interesting to mankind, to morality, to poetry, and to the fine arts, extended the influence of it.

Three leading men, Lessing, Hemsterhuis, and Jacobi, preceded Kant in the career of philosophy. They had no school, because they founded no system; but they began the attack against the doctrine of the materialists. Of these three, Lessing is the one whose opinions, on this point, are the least decided; however, he had too enlarged a mind to be confined within the narrow circle which is so

easily drawn, when we renounce the highest truths. Lessing's all-powerful polemics disclosed doubt upon the most important questions, and led to new inquiries of every kind. Lessing himself cannot be considered either as a materialist or as an idealist; but the necessity of examination and study to the acquisition of knowledge, was the main spring of his doctrine. "If the Almighty," said he, "were to hold Truth in one hand, "and the Search after truth in the other, "it is the latter I should ask of him in pre- "ference."

Lessing was not orthodox in religion. Christianity, in him, was not a necessary thing, like *sentiment;* and yet he was capable of admiring it philosophically. He understood its relations with the human heart, and he ever considers all the different ways of thinking, from a point of view, where he is able to see them all. Nothing intolerant, no exclusion, is to be found in his writings. When we take our stand, in the centre of universal ideas, we never fail to have sincerity, depth, and extent of mind. Whatever is unjust, vain, and narrow, is derived from the desire of referring every thing to certain partial views,

which we have taken and appropriated to ourselves; and which we make the objects of our self-love.

Lessing expresses, in an acute and plain style, opinions full of warmth. Hemsterhuis, a Dutch philosopher, was the first who, in the middle of the eighteenth century, showed, in his writings, the greater part of the liberal ideas, upon which the new German school is founded. His works are also very remarkable, for the contrast which there is between the character of his style, and the thoughts which it conveys. Lessing is an enthusiast, with an ironical manner; Hemsterhuis, an enthusiast, with the language of a mathematician. Writers who devote the most abstract metaphysics to the defence of the most exalted systems, and who conceal the liveliness of imagination under the austerity of logic, are a phænomenon which is scarcely to be found, except amongst the German nations.

Men, who are always upon their guard against imagination, when they have it not, are more ready to trust those writers who banish talent and sensibility from philosophical discussions, as if it were not, at least, as easy to be absurd, upon such subjects, in syllogisms as with eloquence. For a syllo-

gism, which always takes for its basis that such a thing is or is not, reduces the immense crowd of our impressions to a simple alternative, in every case; whilst eloquence embraces them all together. Nevertheless, although Hemsterhuis has too frequently expressed philosophical truths, in an algebraic manner, there is a sentiment of morality, a real love of the beautiful, in his writings, which cannot but be admired; he was one of the first to feel the union which exists between idealism, or (as I should rather say) the free-will of man, and the stoic morality; and it is in this point of view, above all, that the new doctrine of the Germans is of great importance.

Even before the writings of Kant had appeared, Jacobi had attacked the philosophy of sensation, and still more victoriously the system of morality founded upon interest. He did not confine himself strictly, in his philosophy, to abstract forms of reasoning. His analysis of the human soul is full of eloquence and of charms. In the following chapters, I shall examine the finest part of his works, that which relates to morality; but, as a philosopher, he deserves separate honour. Better instructed than any one else

in the history of ancient and modern philosophy, he devoted his studies to the support of the most simple truths. The first amongst the philosophers of his day, he made religious feeling the foundation of our whole intellectual nature; and, it may be said, that he has only learnt the language of metaphysicians and learned men, to do homage, in it, to virtue and divinity.

Jacobi has shown himself the opposer of the philosophy of Kant, but he does not attack it as if he was himself the partisan of the philosophy of sensation*. On the contrary, his objection to Kant is, that he does not rely sufficiently upon the support of religion, considered as the only possible philosophy in those truths which are beyond the reach of experience.

The doctrine of Kant has met with many other opponents in Germany; but it has not been attacked by those who have not understood it, or by those who opposed the opinions of Locke and Condillac, as a complete answer to it. Leibnitz still retained too great an ascendant over the minds of his countrymen, for them not to pay respect to

* This philosophy has, in Germany, generally received the name of *The Empiric Philosophy.*

any opinion which was analogous to his. A long list of writers have, for ten years, been incessantly engaged in writing commentaries on the works of Kant. But, at the present day, the German philosophers, although agreeing with Kant as to the spontaneous activity of thought, have adopted each a system of his own on that point. In fact, who is there who has never endeavoured, according to his abilities, to understand himself? But, because man has given an innumerable variety of explanations of his nature, does it therefore follow that such a philosophical examination is useless? Certainly not. This variety itself is a proof of the interest which such an examination ought to inspire.

In our days, people would be glad to have done with moral nature, and would readily pay its reckoning to hear no more of it. Some say, the language was fixed on such a day of such a month, and that, from that moment, the introduction of a new word became a barbarism; others affirm, that the rules of the drama were definitely settled in such a year (and it is a great pity that a genius, which would now set about making any change in them, was not born before that year), in which every literary discus-

sion, past, present, and future, was determined without appeal. At last, it has been decided in metaphysics above all, that since the days of Condillac it has been impossible to take a single step more, without going out of the way. It is allowed that the physical sciences are making progress, because it cannot be denied; but, in the career of philosophy and literature, the human mind is to be obliged to be incessantly running the ring of vanity around the same circle.

To remain attached to that experimental philosophy which offers a species of evidence, false in principle, although specious in form, is by no means to simplify the system of the universe. By considering every thing as not existing which is beyond the reach of our sensations, it is easy to give light enough to a system, the limits of which we ourselves prescribe; it is a work which depends upon the doer of it. But does every thing beyond those limits exist the less, because it is counted as nothing? The imperfect truth of speculative philosophy is ever much nearer to the essence of things, than that apparent light which belongs to the art of solving difficulties of a certain order. When one reads in the philosophical writings

of the last century these phrases so frequently repeated, *this is all the truth that exists, every thing else is chimerical*, it puts one in mind of the well-known story of a French actor, who, before he would fight with a man much fatter than himself, proposed to chalk out on his adversary's body a line, the hits on the outside of which should go for nothing. Yet there was the same nature without that line as within it, and equally capable of receiving a mortal wound. In the same manner, those who place the pillars of Hercules on the boundary of their horizon, cannot prevent the existence of a nature beyond their own, in which there exists a higher degree of life, than in the sphere of matter to which they would confine us.

The two most celebrated philosophers who have succeeded Kant, are Fichte and Schelling. They too pretended to simplify his system; but it was by putting in its place a species of philosophy more elevated even than his, that they hoped to accomplish it.

Kant had, with a firm hand, separated the two empires of the soul and of the senses. This philosophical duality was fatiguing to minds which love to repose in simple ideas. From the days of the Greeks to our own,

this axiom has often been repeated, *that every thing is one*, and the efforts of philosophers have always been directed to find in one single principle, either in the soul or in nature, an explanation of the world. I shall, nevertheless, venture to say, that it appears to me to be one of the titles which Kant's philosophy has to the confidence of enlightened men, that it affirms, what we feel to be the case, that there exists both a soul and an external nature, and that they act mutually one upon the other by such or such laws. I know not why a greater degree of philosophical elevation is to be found in the idea of one single principle, whether material or intellectual; there being one, or two, does not render the universe more easy of comprehension, and our feeling agrees better with those systems that acknowledge a distinction between physics and morality.

Fichte and Schelling have divided between them the empire which Kant acknowledged to be a divided one, and each has chosen that his own half should be the whole. Both have gone out of the sphere of ourselves, and have been desirous of rising to a knowledge of the system of the universe. Very different in that from Kant, who has applied as

much power of mind so show those things, at the knowledge of which the human mind can never arrive, as to explain those which are within its reach.

No philosopher, however, before Fichte, had extended the system of idealism with such scientific strictness; he makes the whole universe consist of the activity of mind. All conception, all imagination, proceeds from that; it is on account of this system that he has been suspected of unbelief. He was heard to say, that, in his next lesson, he should create GOD, and the world was scandalized with reason at such an expression.—What he meant by it was, that he should show how the idea of the Divinity arose, and was developed in the mind of man. The principal merit of Fichte's philosophy is, the incredible attention that it implies; for he is not contented with referring every thing to the inward existence of man, to the SELF which forms the basis of every thing, but he goes on to distinguish in this SELF what is transient and what is permanent. In fact, when we reflect on the operations of the understanding, we think ourselves eye-witnesses of our own thoughts; we think we see them pass before us like a stream,

whilst the portion of self, which is contemplating them, is immoveable. It often happens to those who unite an impassioned character to an observing mind, to see themselves suffer, and to feel within themselves a being superior to its own pain, which observes it, and reproves or pities it by turns.

We are subject to continual changes from the external circumstances of our life, and yet we always have the feeling of our identity. What is it, then, that attests this identity, if not that *self*, always the same, which sees another *self*, modified by impressions from without, pass before its tribunal?

It is to this immoveable soul, the witness of the moveable soul, that Fichte attributes the gift of immortality, and the power of creating, or (to translate more exactly) of *drawing to a focus in itself the image of the universe.* This system, which makes every thing rest on the summit of our existence, and places a pyramid on its point, is singularly difficult to follow. It strips our ideas of the colours which so well enable us to understand them; and the fine arts, poetry, and the contemplation of nature, disappear

in abstractions which are without any mixture of imagination or sensibility.

Fichte considers the exterior world only as a boundary of our existence, on which thought is at work. In his system, this boundary is created by the soul itself, the activity of which is constantly exerted on the web it has formed. What Fichte has written upon the metaphysical *self*, is a little like the waking of Pygmalion's statue, which, touching alternately itself and the stone on which it was placed, says, by turns, *This is I*, and *This is not I;* but when, taking the hand of Pygmalion, it exclaims, *This indeed is I*— that excites a sentiment which is much beyond the sphere of abstract ideas. Idealism, stripped of sentiment, has nevertheless the advantage of exciting, to the highest degree, the activity of the mind; but nature and love, by this system, lose all their charms; for, if the objects which we see, and the beings whom we love, are nothing but the works of our own ideas, it is man himself that may be considered as *the great cœlibatary of the world.*

It must be acknowledged, however, that the system of Fichte has two great advantages; the one is its stoic morality, which

admits of no excuses; for, every thing proceeding from *self*, it is *self* alone which has to answer for the use it makes of the will: the other is an exercise of thought, at once so severe and so subtile, that a man who had mastered the system, even though he should not adopt it, would have acquired a capacity of attention, and a sagacity in analysis, which would afterwards make any other kind of study a plaything to him.

In whatever manner the utility of metaphysics is judged of, it cannot be denied, that it is the gymnastic exercise of the mind. It is usual to set children on different kinds of wrestling in their earliest years, although it may never be necessary for them to fight in that manner. It may be truly said, that the study of the ideal system of metaphysics is almost a certain means of developing the moral faculties of those who devote themselves to it. Thought, like every thing precious, resides at the bottom of ourselves; for, on the surface, there is nothing but folly and insipidity. But when men are early obliged to dive into their own minds, and to see all that passes within them, they draw from thence a power, and plainness of judgment, which are never lost.

For abstract ideas, Fichte has a mathematical head, like Euler or La Grange. He has a singular contempt for all expressions which in any manner relate to substance; *existence* even is too common a word for him. *Being*, *principle*, *essence*, are words scarcely airy enough to mark the subtile shades in his opinions. It might be said, that he was afraid of coming in contact with realities, and was always shrinking from them. In reading his works, or conversing with him, one loses the consciousness of this world, and feels it necessary, like the ghosts described by Homer, to recall to one's self the remembrances of life.

Materialism absorbs the soul by degrading it; the idealism of Fichte, by exalting it, separates it from nature; in both extremes, *sentiment*, which is the real beauty of existence, has not the rank it deserves.

Schelling has much more knowledge of nature and the fine arts than Fichte, and his lively imagination could not be satisfied with abstract ideas; but, like Fichte, his object is to reduce existence to a single principle. He treats with profound contempt all philosophers who admit two principles; and will not allow the name of Philosophy to any

system but that which unites every thing; and explains every thing. Unquestionably he is right in saying that system would be the best; but where is it? Schelling pretends, that nothing is more absurd than the expression, so commonly used—*the philosophy of Plato—the philosophy of Aristotle.* Should we say, The geometry of Euler—the geometry of La Grange? There is but one philosophy, according to Schelling, or there must be none at all. Certainly, if by philosophy we only understand the enigma of the universe, we may say, with truth, that there is no philosophy.

The system of Kant appeared insufficient to Schelling, as it did to Fichte; because he acknowledges two natures, two sources of our ideas—external objects, and the faculties of the soul. But, in order to arrive at that unity, so much desired; in order to get rid of that double life, physical and moral, which gives so much offence to the partisans of simple ideas, Schelling refers every thing to nature, while Fichte makes every thing spring from the soul. Fichte sees nothing in nature but the opposite of mind: in his eyes it is only a limit or a chain, from which we are constantly to endeavour to free ourselves.

The system of Schelling gives more rest, and greater delight, to the imagination; nevertheless it necessarily returns into that of Spinosa; but, instead of sinking the mind down to the level of matter, which is the practice in our days, Schelling endeavours to raise matter up to mind; and although his theory entirely depends upon physical nature, it is, nevertheless, a very ideal one at the bottom, and still more so in its form.

The ideal and the real supply, in his language, the place of intelligence and matter, of imagination and experience; and it is in the re-union of these two powers in complete harmony, that, in his opinion, the single principle of the organized world consists. This harmony, of which the two poles and the centre form the image, and which is comprised in the number three, so mysterious at all times, has supplied Schelling with the most ingenious applications. He believes it is to be found in the fine arts, as well as in nature; and his works on physical science are thought highly of, even by those learned men who confine themselves to the consideration of facts, and their results. Indeed, in examining the mind, he endeavours to demonstrate how sensations and intel-

lectual conceptions are confounded in the sentiment which unites whatever is involuntary and reflective in both of them, and thus contains all the mystery of life.

What is most interesting in these systems is their developements. The first basis of the pretended explanation of the world is equally true, and equally false, in the greater number of theories; for all of them are comprised in the immense thought, which it is their object to embrace: but, in their application to the things of this world, these theories are very refined, and often throw great light on many particular objects.

Schelling, it cannot be denied, approaches nearly to the philosophers called Pantheists, that is to say, who attribute to nature all the attributes of the Divinity. But what distinguishes him is, the astonishing sagacity with which he has managed to connect his doctrine with the arts and sciences; he is instructive, and requires thought, in all his observations: and the depth of his mind is particularly surprising when he does not pretend to apply it to the secret of the universe; for no man can attain a superiority which cannot exist between beings of the same

kind, at whatever distance they may be placed from each other.

To keep up the ideas of religion in the midst of the apotheosis of nature, the school of Schelling supposes that the individual within us perishes, but that the inward qualities which we possess, enter again into the great whole of the eternal creation. Such an immortality is terribly like death; for physical death itself is nothing but universal nature recalling to herself the gifts she had given to the individual.

Schelling draws from his system some very noble conclusions on the necessity of cultivating in the soul its immortal qualities, those which are in relation with the universe, and of despising every thing in us which relates to our circumstances alone. But are not the affections of the heart, and even conscience itself, allied to the relations of this life? In most situations we feel two distinct motions—that which unites us with the general order, and that which leads us to our particular interests; the sentiment of duty, and personality. The noblest of these motions is the universal. But it is, exactly, because we have an instinct which would preserve our existence, that it is a fine thing

to sacrifice that instinct; it is because we are beings, whose centre is in ourselves, that our attraction towards the assemblage of all things is generous; in a word, it is because we exist individually and distinctly, that we can choose out and love one another. What then becomes of that abstract immortality which would strip us of our dearest recollections as mere accidental modifications?

Would you, say they in Germany, rise again in all your present circumstances?—Would you be revived a Baron, or a Marquis? Certainly not. But who would not rise again a mother or a daughter? and how could we be ourselves again, if we had no longer the same feelings of friendship? Vague ideas of re-union with nature will, in time, destroy the empire of religion over our souls; for religion is addressed to each of us individually. Providence protects us in all the details of our lot. Christianity is adapted to every mind, and sympathizes, like a confidential friend, with the wants of every heart. Pantheism, on the contrary, that is, nature deified, by inspiring religion for every thing, disperses it over the world, instead of concentrating it in ourselves.

This system has at all times had many

partisans amongst philosophers. Thought is always tending, more and more, to generalization; and the labour of the mind, in extending its boundaries, is often taken for a new idea. We hope to arrive at a knowledge of the universe, as of space, by always removing fences, and setting difficulties farther from us without resolving them; and yet we are no nearer to infinity. Sentiment alone reveals it to us, without explaining it.

What is truly admirable in German philosophy is the examination of ourselves to which it leads; it ascends even to the origin of the will, even to the unknown spring of the course of our life; and then penetrating the deepest secrets of grief, and of faith, it enlightens and strengthens us. But all systems which aspire to the explanation of the universe, can hardly be analysed with clearness by any expressions: words are not proper for ideas of this kind, and the consequence is, that, in making use of them, all things are overshadowed by the darkness which preceded the creation, not illuminated by the light which succeeded it. Scientific expressions, lavished on a subject in which every one feels that he is interested, are revolting to self-love. These writings, so dif-

ficult to comprehend, however serious one may be, give occasion to pleasantry; for mistakes are always made in the dark. It is pleasing to reduce, to a few leading and accessible assertions, that crowd of shades and restrictions which appear quite sacred to the author of them, but which the profane soon forget or confound.

The Orientalists have at all times been idealists, and Asia in no respect resembles the south of Europe. The excessive heat in those countries leads to contemplation, as the excessive cold of the north does. The religious systems of India are very melancholy and spiritual, whilst the people of the south of Europe have always had an inclination for rather a material kind of Paganism. The learned of England, who have travelled into India, have made deep researches about Asia; and Germans who have not had opportunities, like the princes of the Ocean, to inform themselves with their own eyes, have, by dint of study alone, arrived at very interesting discoveries on the religion, the literature, the languages, of the Asiatic nations; they have been led to think, from many indications, that supernatural light once shone upon the people of those countries, and that

the traces of it still remain indelible. The philosophy of the Indians can only be sufficiently understood by the German idealists; a similarity of opinion assists them in comprehending it.

Frederick Schlegel, not contented with the knowledge of almost all the languages of Europe, devoted unheard-of labours to acquiring the knowledge of the country which was the cradle of the world. The work which he has just published on the language and philosophy of the Indians, contains profound views and real information worthy the attention of enlightened men in Europe.

He thinks, and many philosophers (in the number of whom Bailly may be reckoned) have maintained the same opinion, that a primitive people inhabited some parts of the world, and particularly Asia, at a period anterior to all the documents of history. Frederick Schlegel finds the traces of this people in the intellectual advancements of nations, and the formation of their languages.—He observes a remarkable resemblance between the leading ideas, and even the words which express them, amongst many nations of the world, even when, so far as we are informed by history, they have never had any

connexion with each other. Frederick Schlegel does not adopt the very generally received opinion, that men began in the savage state, and that their mutual wants, by degrees, formed languages. Thus to attribute the developement of the human mind and soul to our animal nature, is to give it a very gross origin, and Rousseau combats the hypothesis, as much as Imagination rejects it.

We can hardly conceive by what gradation it would be possible, from the cry of the savage, to arrive at the perfection of the Greek language; it would be said, that, in the progress necessary to traverse such an infinite distance, every step would cross an abyss; we see, in our days, that savages do not civilize themselves, and that it is from neighbouring nations that they are taught, with great labour, what they themselves are ignorant of. One is much tempted, therefore, to think, that a primitive nation did establish the human race; and whence was that people formed, if not from revelation? All nations have, at all times, expressed regret for the loss of a state of happiness which preceded the period in which they existed: whence arises this idea, so widely spread? will it be said, it is an error? Errors that are

universal are always founded upon some truth, altered and disfigured perhaps, but bottomed on facts concealed in the night of ages, or some mysterious powers of nature.

Those who attribute the civilization of the human race to the effects of physical wants uniting men with one another, will have difficulty in explaining how it happens that the moral culture of the most ancient nations is more poetical, more favourable to the fine arts, in a word, more nobly useless, in the relations of materialism, than all the refinements of modern civilization. The philosophy of the Indians is ideal, and their religion mystical: certainly it is not the necessity of maintaining order in society, which has given birth to that philosophy, or to that religion.

Poetry has almost every where existed before prose; and the introduction of metres, rhythm, and harmony, is anterior to the rigorous precision, and consequently to the useful employment of languages. Astronomy has not been studied for the service of agriculture alone: but the Chaldeans, Egyptians, &c. have carried their researches much beyond the practical advantages which are to be derived from it; and the love of heaven,

and the worship of time, are supposed to be shown in these profound and exact observations, respecting the divisions of the year, the courses of the stars, and the periods of their junction.

In China, the kings were the first astronomers of their country. They passed nights in contemplating the progress of the stars, and their royal dignity consisted in those exalted species of knowledge, and in those disinterested occupations, which raised them above the vulgar. The magnificent system, which considers civilization as having for its origin a religious revelation, is supported by an erudition, of which the partisans of the materialist doctrines are seldom capable: to be wholly devoted to study, is to be almost an idealist at once.

Men accustomed to deep and solitary reflections, penetrate so forward into truth, that, in my opinion, a man must be ignorant or conceited to despise any of their writings, without having long considered them. There were formerly many errors and superstitions, which were attributable to want of knowledge; but when, with the light of our times, and the immense labours of indivi-

duals, opinions are propounded which are beyond the circle of our daily experience, it is a cause of rejoicing to the human race; for its actual treasures are very scanty, at least if one may judge by the use made of it.

In reading the account which I have given of the principal ideas of some of the German philosophers, on the one hand, their partisans will discover, with reason, that I have noticed, very superficially, researches of great importance; and, on the other hand, the world will ask, Of what use is all this? But of what use are the Apollo Belvidere, the pictures of Raphael, the tragedies of Racine? Of what use is every thing fine, if not to the mind? It is the same with philosophy; it is the beauty of thought, it attests the dignity of man, who is able to occupy himself with what is external and invisible, although the gross particles of his nature would remove him from them.

I might cite many other names justly distinguished in the lists of philosophy; but it appears to me, that this sketch, however imperfect, is sufficient to serve as an introduction to the examination of the influence

which the transcendant philosophy of the Germans has exercised over the developement of the mind, and over the character and morality of the nation in which that philosophy prevails; and that, above all, is the object I propose to myself.

CHAPTER VIII.

Influence of the new German Philosophy over the Developement of the Mind.

ATTENTION is, perhaps, the most powerful of all the faculties of the human mind; and it cannot be denied, that the ideal system of metaphysics strengthens it in a surprising manner. Buffon pretended that genius might be acquired by patience; that was saying too much; but the homage thus rendered to attention, under the name of patience, does great honour to a man of so brilliant an imagination. Abstract ideas require great efforts of meditation; but when to them is joined the most exact and persevering observation of the inward actions of the will, the whole power of intelligence is at once employed. Subtilty is a great fault in the affairs of this world, but certainly the Germans are not suspected of it. The philosophical subtilty, which enables us to unravel the minutest threads of our thoughts, is exactly the best calculated to extend the genius; for

a reflection, from which the sublimest inventions, the most astonishing discoveries may result, passes unperceived within us, if we have not acquired the habit of examining with sagacity the consequences and connexions of ideas apparently the most remote from each other.

In Germany, a superior man seldom confines himself to one line. Goëthe has made discoveries in science; Schelling is an excellent writer; Frederick Schlegel, a poet full of originality. A great number of different talents cannot, perhaps, be united; but the view of the understanding ought to embrace every thing.

The new German philosophy is necessarily more favourable than any other to the extension of the mind; for, referring every thing to the focus of the soul, and considering the world itself as governed by laws, the type of which is in ourselves; it does not admit the prejudice which destines every man exclusively to such or such a branch of study. The idealists believe, that an art, a science, or any other subject, cannot be understood without an universal knowledge, and that from the smallest phænomenon up to the greatest, nothing can be learnedly

examined, or poetically described, without that elevation of mind which sees the whole, while it is describing the parts.

Montesquieu says, *that wit consists in knowing the resemblance of things which differ, and the difference of things which are alike.* If there could exist a theory which would teach a man how to become a wit, it would be that of the understanding as the Germans conceive it; there is no one more favourable to ingenious approximations between external objects and the faculties of the mind; they are the different radii of the same centre. Most physical axioms correspond with moral truths; and universal philosophy, in a thousand ways, represents Nature always the same, and always varying; who is reflected, at full length, in every one of her works, and gives the stamp of the universe to the blade of grass, as well as to the cedar.

This philosophy gives a singular attraction to all kinds of study. The discoveries which we make within ourselves are always interesting; but if it is true that they would enlighten us, on the mysteries even of a world created in our image, what curiosity do they not inspire? The conversation of a

German philosopher, such as those I have named, calls to mind the dialogues of Plato; and when you question one of these men, upon any subject whatever, he throws so much light on it, that, in listening to him, you seem to think for the first time, if to think be, as Spinosa says, *to identify one's self with Nature by intelligence, and to become one with her.*

So many new ideas, on literary and philosophical subjects, have, for some years past, been in circulation in Germany, that a stranger might very well take a man, who should only repeat these ideas, for a superior genius. It has sometimes happened to me, to give men, ordinary enough in other respects, credit for prodigious minds, only because they had become familiarized with the system of the idealists, the day-star of a new life.

The faults for which the Germans are commonly reproached in conversation, slowness and pedantry, are remarked infinitely less in the disciples of the modern school: persons of the first rank, in Germany, have formed themselves, for the most part, according to good French manners; but now there is established amongst the philosophers and

men of letters, a sort of education, also in good taste, although of quite another kind. True elegance is considered as inseparable from a poetical imagination, and love for the fine arts, and politeness, as united to knowledge, and to the appreciation of talents and natural qualities.

It cannot, however, be denied, that the new philosophical and literary systems have inspired their partisans with great contempt for those who do not understand them. The wit of the French always aims at humiliating by ridicule; its plan is to avoid the idea, in order to attack the person, and the substance, in order to laugh at the form. The Germans of the new school look upon ignorance and frivolity as diseases of prolonged infancy: they do not confine themselves to contests with strangers, but they attack each other with bitterness; and to hear them, one would suppose, that to possess a single additional degree, either of abstraction or of profundity, conferred a right to treat as vulgar and narrow-minded all those who would not or could not attain it.

When men's minds are irritated by obstacles, exaggeration becomes mixed with that philosophical revolution, which, in other

respects, is so salutary. The Germans of the new school penetrate into the interior of the soul, with the torch of genius. But when they are required to introduce their ideas into the minds of others, they are at a loss for the means, and begin to affect contempt for their hearers, because they are ignorant, not of the truth itself, but of the means of imparting it. Contempt, except for vice, argues almost always a limited mind; for, with a greater share of understanding, we could make ourselves understood even by vulgar minds, or at least we might sincerely endeavour to do so.

The talent of methodical and clear expression is very rare in Germany: it is not acquired by speculative studies. We must (as it were) place ourselves without our own thoughts, to judge of the form which should be given to them. Philosophy teaches the knowledge of *man*, rather than of *men*. Habits of society alone teach us the relation our minds bear to those of others. Sincere and serious philosophers are led, first by candour, and then by pride, to feel irritated against those who do not think or feel as they do. The Germans seek for truth conscientiously; but they have a very warm

spirit of party in favour of the doctrine which they adopt; for, in the heart of man, every thing degenerates into passion.

But notwithstanding the diversity of opinions, which, in Germany, form schools in opposition to one another, they tend equally, for the most part, to display activity of mind; so that there is no country where every man makes more advantage of himself, at least in regard to intellectual labours.

CHAPTER IX.

Influence of the new German Philosophy on Literature and the Arts.

WHAT I have just said on the developement of the mind, applies likewise to literature; yet it may be interesting to add some particular observations to these general reflections.

In those countries where it is supposed that all our ideas have their origin in external objects, it is natural to set a higher value on the observance of graces or forms, the empire of which is placed without us: but where, on the other hand, men feel convinced of the immutable laws of moral existence, society has less power over every individual; men treat of every thing with themselves; and what is deemed essential, as well in the productions of thought as in the actions of life, is, that they spring from inward conviction and spontaneous feeling.

There are, in style, some qualities which are connected with truth in the sentiment expressed, and there are others which depend on grammatical correctness. It would be difficult to make the Germans understand, that the first thing to look for in a work, is the manner in which it is written, and that the execution of it should be of more importance than the conception. In experimental philosophy, a work is esteemed, above all things, according to the ingenious and lucid form, under which it is presented; in ideal philosophy, on the contrary, where all attraction is in the focus of the mind, those writers only are admired who approach the nearest to that point.

It must be admitted too, that the habit of searching into the most hidden mysteries of our being, gives the mind a taste for what is deepest, and sometimes for what is most obscure in thought. Thus the Germans too often blend metaphysics with poetry.

The new philosophy inspires us with the necessity of rising to thoughts and sentiments without bounds. This impulse may be favourable to genius, but it is so to genius alone, and it often gives to those who are destitute of genius very ridiculous pretensions.

In France, mediocrity finds every thing too powerful and too exalted; in Germany, it finds nothing so high as the new doctrine. In France, mediocrity laughs at enthusiasm; in Germany, it despises a certain sort of reason. A writer can never do enough to convince German readers that his ideas are not superficial, that he is occupied, in all things, with the immortal and the infinite. But as the faculties of the mind are not always correspondent to such vast desires, it often happens that gigantic efforts produce but common results. Nevertheless, this general disposition assists the flight of thought; and it is easier, in literature, to set bounds, than to give emulation.

The taste which the Germans show for what is playful and simple, and of which I have already had occasion to speak, seems to be in contradiction to their inclination for metaphysics—an inclination which arises from the desire of knowing and of analysing one's self: at the same time, it is to the influence of a system that we are to refer this taste for playful simplicity; for, in Germany, there is philosophy in every thing, even in the imagination. One of the first characteristics of simplicity is to express what is

felt or thought, without reflecting on any result, or aiming at any object; and it is in that respect that it agrees with the theory of the Germans on literature.

In separating the beautiful from the useful, Kant clearly proves, that it is not in the nature of the fine arts to give lessons. Undoubtedly, every thing that is beautiful ought to give birth to generous sentiments, and those sentiments excite to virtue; but when the object is to put in proof a precept of morality, the free impression produced by masterpieces of art is necessarily destroyed; for the object aimed at, be it what it will, when it is known, limits and confines the imagination. It is related, that Louis XIV. once said to a preacher, who had directed a sermon against him, "I am ready enough to "take to myself my share, but I will not "have it allotted for me." These words might be applied to the fine arts in general: they ought to elevate the mind, and not to school it.

Nature often displays her magnificence without any aim, and often with a profuseness, which the partisans of utility would call prodigal. She seems to delight in giving more splendour to the flowers to the trees

of the forest, than to the vegetables which serve for the food of man. If what is useful held the first rank in nature, would she not adorn the nutritious plants with more charms than roses, which are only beautiful? And whence comes it, that to deck the altar of the Divinity with flowers which are useless, should be preferred to doing it with the productions which are necessary to us? How happens it, that what serves for the support of our lives, has less dignity than beauties which have no object? It is because the beautiful recalls to our minds an immortal and divine existence, the recollection and the regret of which live at the same time in our hearts.

It certainly is not from a want of understanding the moral value of what is useful, that Kant has separated it from the beautiful; it is to ground admiration of every kind on absolute disinterestedness; it is in order to give sentiments which render vice impossible, the preference over the lessons which only serve to correct it.

The mythological fables of the ancients were seldom intended as moral exhortations, or edifying examples; and it does not at all argue that the moderns are better than the ancients, that they oftener endeavour to give

an useful result to their fictions; it is rather because they have less imagination, and carry into literature the habit which business gives, of always aiming at some object. Events, as they exist in reality, are not calculated beforehand, like a fiction, the winding up of which is moral. Life itself is conceived in quite a poetical manner; for it is not, in general, because the guilty man is punished, and the virtuous man rewarded, that it makes a moral impression upon us; it is because it developes in the mind indignation against the guilty, and enthusiasm towards the virtuous.

The Germans do not, according to the common notion, consider the imitation of nature as the principal object of art; it is ideal beauty which appears to them the principle of all masterpieces; and their poetical theory accords, in this respect, with their philosophy. The impression made on us by the fine arts has nothing whatever in common with the pleasure we feel from any imitation: man has in his soul innate sentiments which objects of reality will never satisfy, and it is to these sentiments that the imagination of painters and poets gives form and life. Of what is music, the first of all arts, an imitation? And yet, of all

the gifts of the Divinity, it is the most noble; for it may be said to be a superfluous one. The sun gives us light—we breathe the air of a serene atmosphere—all the beauties of nature are, in some way, serviceable to man; music alone has a noble inutility, and it is for that reason that it affects us so deeply; the more it is without an object, the nearer it approaches to that inward source of our thoughts, which application to any object whatever checks in its course.

The literary theory of the Germans differs from all others, in not subjecting writers to customs, nor to tyrannical restrictions. It is a creative theory, a philosophy of the fine arts, which, instead of confining them, seeks, like Prometheus, to steal fire from heaven, to give it to the poets. Did Homer, Dante, or Shakespeare, I shall be asked, know any thing of all this? Did they stand in need of all this metaphysical reasoning to be great writers? Nature, undoubtedly, has not waited for philosophy; which means only, that the fact preceded the observation of the fact; but, as we have reached the epoch of theories, should we not be on our guard against those which may stifle talent?

It must, however, be allowed, that many essential inconveniencies result from the application of these systems of philosophy to literature. German readers, accustomed to peruse Kant, Fichte, &c. consider a less degree of obscurity as clearness itself; and writers do not always give to works of art that striking clearness which is so necessary to them. Constant attention may, nay ought to, be exacted where abstract ideas are the subject; but emotions are involuntary. In the enjoyment of the arts, indulgence, effort, and reflection can have no place: what we have to deal with there is pleasure, and not reasoning: philosophy may require attentive examination, but poetical talent ought to carry us away with it.

Ingenious ideas, derived from theories, cause illusion as to the real nature of talent. They prove, with wit, that such or such a piece ought not to have pleased, but still it did please; and then they begin to despise those who like it. They prove, that another piece, composed according to certain principles, ought to interest; and yet, when they would have it performed, when they say to it, "*Arise, and walk*," the piece does not go off; and then they despise those who

are not amused with a work composed according to the laws of harmony, between the ideal and the real. People are generally wrong when they find fault with the judgment of the public in the arts, for popular impressions are more philosophical than even philosophy itself; and when the ideas of men of information do not agree with this impression, it is not because they are too profound, but rather because they are not deep enough.

It appears to me, however, infinitely better for the literature of a country, that its poetical system should be founded upon philosophical notions, even if they are a little abstract, than upon simple external rules; for these rules are but wooden bars, to prevent children from falling.

In their imitation of the ancients, the Germans have taken quite a different direction from the rest of Europe. The conscientious character, from which they never depart, has prevented their mixing together modern and ancient genius; they treat fiction in some respects like truth, for they find means to be scrupulous even in regard to that; they apply the same disposition to acquire an exact and thorough knowledge of

the monuments which are left us of past ages. In Germany, the study of antiquity, like that of the sciences and of philosophy, unites the scattered branches of the human mind.

Heyne, with a wonderful quickness of apprehension, embraces every thing that relates to literature, to history, and to the fine arts. From the most refined observations Wolf draws the boldest inferences, and, disdaining all submission to authority, adopts an opinion of his own of the worth and authenticity of the writings of the Greeks. In a late composition by M. Ch. de Villers, whom I have already mentioned with the high esteem he deserves, it may be seen what immense works are published every year in Germany on the classical authors. The Germans believe themselves called in every thing to act the part of observers; and it may be said that they are not of the age they live in, so much do their reflections and inclinations turn towards another epoch of the world.

It may be that the best time for poetry was during the age of ignorance, and that the youthful season of the human race is gone for ever; but, in the writings of the Germans, we seem to feel a new youth again

reviving and springing up from the noble choice which may be made by those to whom every thing is known. The age of light has its innocence, as well as the golden age; and if man, during his infancy, believes only in his soul, he returns, when he has learnt every thing, to confide in nothing else.

CHAPTER X.

Influence of the new Philosophy on the Sciences.

THERE is no doubt that the ideal philosophy leads to the augmentation of knowledge; and by disposing the mind to turn back upon itself, increases its penetration and perseverance in intellectual labour. But is this philosophy equally favourable to the sciences, which consist in the observation of nature? It is to the examination of this question that the following reflections are destined:—

The progress of the sciences in the last century has generally been attributed to the experimental philosophy; and as the observation is of great importance to this subject, men have been thought more certain of attaining to scientific truths, in proportion as they attached more importance to external objects; yet the country of Keppler and Leibnitz is not be despised for science. The principal modern discoveries, gunpowder and the art of printing, have been made

by the Germans; and, nevertheless, men's minds in Germany have always tended towards idealism.

Bacon compared speculative philosophy to the lark, who mounts to the sky, and descends again without bringing any thing back from her flight; and experimental philosophy to the falcon, who soars as high, but returns with his prey.

Perhaps in our days Bacon would have felt the inconveniencies of philosophy purely experimental; it has turned thought into sensation, morality into self-interest, and nature into mechanism; it tends to degrade all things. The Germans have combatted its influence in the physical sciences, as well as in science of a higher order; and while they submit Nature to the fullest observation, they consider her phænomena, in general, in a vast and animated manner: the empire of an opinion over the imagination always affords a presumption in its favour; for every thing tells us, that beauty, in the sublime conception of the universe, is truth.

The new philosophy has already exerted its influence, in many respects, over the physical sciences in Germany. In the first place, the same spirit of universality, which I have

remarked in the men of literature and the philosophers, also discovers itself among the men of science. Humboldt relates, like an accurate observer, the perilous travels which he undertook like a brave chevalier; and his writings are equally interesting to naturalists and to poets. Schelling, Bader, Schubert, &c. have published works, in which the sciences are presented under a point of view that captivates both our reflection and our imagination; and, long previous to the existence of modern metaphysicians, Keppler and Haller knew the art of observing Nature, and at the same time of conjecturing her operations.

The attraction of society is so great in France, that it allows nobody much time for labour. It is natural then not to place reliance upon those who attempt to unite many studies of different denominations. But, in a country where the whole life of a man may be given up to meditation, it is reasonable to encourage the multifariousness of knowledge; —the student eventually confines his attention to that pursuit which he prefers; but it is, perhaps, impossible to attain a thorough comprehension of one science, and not to touch upon all. Sir Humphry Davy, al-

though the first chemist in England, studies literature with as much taste as success. Literature and science reflect alternate light upon each other; and the connexion which exists between all the objects in nature, must also be maintained among the ideas of man.

Universality of knowledge necessarily leads to the desire of discovering the general laws of the order of nature. The Germans descend from theory to experience; while the French ascend from experience to theory. The French reproach the Germans with having no beauties but those of detail in their literature, and with not understanding the *composition* of a work. The Germans reproach the French with considering only particular facts in the sciences, and with not referring them to a system; in this consists the principal difference between the learned men of the two countries.

In fact, if it was possible to discover the principles which govern the universe, this would be the point, indisputably, from which we ought to commence in studying all that is derived from those principles: but we are almost entirely ignorant of the *collective character* of every thing, excepting in what detail teaches us; and nature, for the eye

of man, is but the scattered Sibyl's leaves, out of which, even to this day, no human being has composed a book. Nevertheless, the learned men of Germany, who are philosophers at the same time, diffuse a surprising interest over the phænomena of this world: they do not examine nature fortuitously, or according to the accidental course of what they experience; but they predict, by reflection, what observation is about to confirm.

Two great general opinions serve them for guides in studying the sciences;—the one, that the universe is made after the model of the human soul; the other, that the analogy of every part of the universe, with its *whole*, is so close, that the same idea is constantly reflected from the whole in every part, and from every part in the whole.

It is a fine conception, that has a tendency to discover the resemblance between the laws of the human understanding and those of nature, and that considers the physical world as the basso-relievo of the moral. If the same genius was capable of composing the Iliad, and of carving like Phidias, the Jupiter of the sculptor would resemble the Jupiter of the poet. Why then should not the supreme

Intelligence, which formed nature and the soul, have made one the emblem of the other? There is no vain play of fancy in those continual metaphors, which aid us in comparing our sentiments with external phænomena; sadness, with the clouded heaven; composure, with the silver moonlight; anger, with the stormy sea:—it is the same thought of our Creator, transfused into two different languages, and capable of reciprocal interpretation. Almost all the axioms of physics correspond with the maxims of morals. This species of parallel progress, which may be perceived between the world and the mind, is the indication of a great mystery; and every understanding would be struck with it, if any positive discoveries had yet been drawn from this source;—but still, the uncertain lustre that already streams from it carries our views to a great distance.

The analogies between the different elements of external nature together constitute the chief law of the creation—variety in unity, and unity in variety. For example, What is there more astonishing than the connexion between sounds and forms, and between sounds and colours? A German (Chladni) lately proved by experiment, that

the vibrations of sound put grains of sand upon a glass plate in motion after such a manner, that when the tones are pure, the sand arranges itself into regular forms, and when the tones are discordant, there is no symmetry in the figures traced upon the glass. Sanderson, who was blind from his birth, said, that the colour of scarlet, in his idea, was like the sound of a trumpet; and a mathematician wished to make a harpsichord for the eyes, which might imitate, by the harmony of colours, the pleasure excited by music. We incessantly compare painting to music; because the emotions we feel discover analogies where cold observation would only have seen differences.

Every plant, every flower, contains the entire system of the universe; an instant of life conceals eternity within it; the weakest atom is a world, and the world itself, perchance, is but an atom. Every portion of the universe appears to be a mirror, in which the whole creation is represented; and we hardly know which is most worthy of our admiration, thought always the same, or form always different.

The learned among the Germans may be divided into two classes—those who entirely devote themselves to observation, and those

who aspire to the honour of foreseeing the secrets of nature. Of the former we ought first to mention Werner, who has drawn from mineralogy his knowledge of the formation of the globe, and of the epochs of history; Herschel and Schroeter, who are incessantly making new discoveries in the heavenly regions; the calculating astronomers, such as Zach and Bode; and great chemists, like Klaproth and Bucholz: while in the class of philosophical naturalists we must reckon Schelling, Ritter, Bader, Steffens, &c. The most distinguished geniuses of these two classes approach and understand each other; for the philosophical naturalists cannot despise experience, and the profound observers do not deny the possible results of sublime contemplations.

Attraction and impulse have already been the objects of novel inquiry; and they have been happily applied to chemical affinities. Light, considered as a medium between matter and mind, has given occasion for several highly philosophical observations. A work of Goëthe upon colours is favourably mentioned. In short, throughout Germany emulation is excited by the desire and the hope of uniting experimental and speculative

philosophy, and thus enlarging our knowledge of man and of nature.

Intellectual idealism makes the will (which is the soul) the centre of every thing: the principle of idealism in physical sciences is life. Man reaches the highest degree of analysis by chemistry as he does by reasoning; but *life* escapes him in chemistry, as *sentiment* does in reasoning. A French writer had pretended, that "thought was only the "material product of the brain;"—another learned man has said, that when we are more advanced in chemistry, we shall be able to tell "how life is made:"—the one outraged nature, as the other outraged the soul.

"We must," said Fichte, "comprehend "what is incomprehensible, *as such.*" This singular expression contains a profound meaning: we must feel and recognise what will ever remain inaccessible to analysis, and what the soaring flight of thought alone can approach.

Three distinct modes of existence are thought to have been discovered in nature —vegetation, irritability, and sensibility. Plants, animals, and men are included in these three sorts of life; and if we choose to apply even to individuals of our own species

this ingenious division, we shall find it equally discernible among their different characters. Some vegetate like plants; others enjoy themselves, or are irritated like animals; and the more noble, in a word, possess and display the qualities that distinguish our human nature. However this may be, volition, which is life, and life, which also is volition, comprehend all the secret of the universe and of ourselves; and at this secret (as we can neither deny nor explain it) we must necessarily arrive by a kind of divination.

What an exertion of strength would it not require to overturn, with a lever made upon the model of the arm, the weight which the arm uplifts! Do we not see every day anger, or some other affection of the soul, augmenting, as by a miracle, the power of the human body? What then is this mysterious power of nature, which manifests itself by the will of man? and how, without studying its cause and effects, can we make any important discovery in the theory of physical powers?

The doctrine of the Scotch writer, Brown, more profoundly analysed in Germany than elsewhere, is founded upon this same system of central action and unity, which is so fruit-

ful in its consequences. Brown believed that a state of suffering, or of health, did not depend upon partial evils, but upon the intenseness of the vital principle, which is lowered or exalted according to the different vicissitudes of existence.

Among the learned English there is hardly one, besides Hartley and his disciple Priestley, who has considered metaphysics, as well as physics, under a point of view entirely material. It will be said that physics *can* only be material: I presume not to be of that opinion. Those who make the soul itself a passive being, have the strongest reason to exclude every spontaneous action of the will of man from the positive sciences; and yet there are many circumstances in which this power of willing influences the energy of life, and in which life acts upon matter. The principle of existence is, as it were, intermediary between physics and morals; and its power cannot be calculated, but yet cannot be denied, unless we are ignorant of what constitutes animated nature, and reduce its laws purely to mechanism.

Whatever opinion we may form of the system of Dr. Gall, he is respected by all men of science for his anatomical studies

and discoveries: and if we consider the organs of thought as different from thought itself, that is to say, as the faculties which it employs, it appears to me that we may admit memory and the power of calculation, the aptitude for this or that science, the talent for any particular art, every thing, in short, which serves the understanding like an instrument, to depend in some measure on the structure of the brain. If there exists a graduated scale from a stone upwards to the life of man, there must be certain faculties in us which partake of soul and body at once, and of this number are memory and the calculating power, the most physical of our intellectual, and the most intellectual of our physical faculties. But we should begin to err at the moment that we attributed an influence over our moral qualities to the structure of the brain; for the will is absolutely independent of our physical faculties: it is in the purely intellectual action of this will that conscience consists; and conscience is, and ought to be, free from the influence of corporeal organization.

A young physician of great ability, Koreff, has already attracted the attention of those who understand him, by some entirely new

observations upon the principle of life; upon the action of death; upon the causes of insanity. All this restlessness among the men of genius announces some revolution in the very manner of studying the sciences. It is impossible, as yet, to foresee the results of this change; but we may affirm with truth, that, if the Germans suffer imagination to guide them, they spare themselves no labour, no research, no study; and that they unite, in the highest degree, two qualities which seem to exclude each other—patience and enthusiasm.

Some learned Germans, pushing their physical idealism too far, contest the truth of the axiom, *that there is no action at a distance*, and wish, on the contrary, to re-establish spontaneous motion throughout nature. They reject the hypothesis of fluids, the effects of which would, in some points, depend upon mechanic forces; pressing and re-pressing each other without the guidance of any independent organization.

Those who consider nature in the light of an *intellectual being*, do not attach to this denomination the same sense which custom has authorized. For the thought of man consists in the faculty of turning back upon

itself; and the intelligence of nature advances straight forward, like the instinct of animals. Thought has self-possession, for it can judge itself;—intelligence without reflection is a power always attracted to things without. When Nature performs the work of crystallization according to the most regular forms, it does not follow that she understands the mathematics; or, at all events, she is ignorant of her own knowledge, and wants self-consciousness. The German men of science attribute a certain individual originality to physical forces; and, on the other side, they appear to admit (from their manner of exhibiting some phænomena of animal magnetism), that the will of man, without any external act, exerts a very great influence over matter, and especially over metals.

Pascal says, "that astrologers and alche-"mists have some principles, but that they "abuse them." There were, perhaps, of old, more intimate relations between man and nature than now exist. The mysteries of Eleusis; the religion of the Egyptians; the system of emanations among the Indians; the Persian adoration of the elements and the sun; the harmony of numbers, which was the basis of the Pythagorean doctrine—are

vestiges of some curious attraction which united man with the universe.

The doctrines of spirituality, by fortifying the power of reflection, have separated man more from physical influences; and the Reformation, by carrying still farther his tendency towards analysis, has put reason on its guard against the primary impressions of the imagination. The Germans promote the true perfection of the human mind, when they endeavour to awaken the inspirations of nature by the light of thought.

Experience every day leads the learned to recognise phænomena, which men had ceased to believe, because they were mingled with superstitions, and had been the subjects of presages. The ancients have related that stones fell from heaven; and in our days the accuracy of this fact, the existence of which had been denied, is established. The ancients have spoken of showers red as blood, and of *earth-lightnings*—we have lately been convinced of the truth of their assertions in these respects.

Astronomy and music are the science and art which men have known from all antiquity: why should not sounds and the stars be connected by relations which the ancients

perceived, and which we may find out again? Pythagoras maintained that the planets were proportionably at the same distance as the seven chords of the lyre; and it is affirmed, that he predicted the new planet which has been discovered between Mars and Jupiter*. It appears that he was not ignorant of the true system of the heavens, the fixedness of the sun; since Copernicus supports himself in this instance upon the opinion of Pythagoras, as recorded by Cicero. From whence then arose these astonishing discoveries, without the aid of experience, and of the new machines of which the moderns are in possession? The reason is this—the ancients advanced boldly, lit by the sun of genius. They made use of reason, the resting-place of human intellect; but they also consulted Imagination, the priestess of nature.

Those which we call errors and superstitions may, perhaps, depend upon laws of the universe, yet unknown to man. The relations between the planets and metals, the influence of these relations, even oracles and

* M. Prevost, Professor of Philosophy at Geneva, has published a very interesting pamphlet on this subject.—This philosophical writer is as well known in Europe as esteemed in his country.

presages—may they not be caused by occult powers, of which we have no idea? And who knows whether there is not a germ of truth hidden under every apologue, under every mode of belief, which has been stigmatized with the name of madness? It assuredly does not follow that we should renounce the experimental method, so necessary in the sciences. But why not furnish a supreme director for this method in a philosophy more comprehensive, which would embrace the universe in its *collective character*, and which would not despise *the nocturnal side of nature*, in the expectation of being able to throw light upon it? It is the business of poetry (we may be answered) to consider the physical world in this manner; but we can arrive at no certain knowledge except by experience; and all that is not susceptible of proof may be an amusement to the mind, but cannot forward our real progress.

Doubtless, the French are right in recommending the Germans to have a respect for experience; but they are wrong in turning into ridicule the presages of reflection, which perhaps will hereafter be confirmed by the knowledge of facts. The greater part of grand discoveries have at first appeared absurd; and

the man of genius will never do any thing if he dreads being exposed to ridicule.—Ridicule is nerveless when despised, and ascends in influence just as it is feared. We see in fairy tales phantoms that oppose the enterprises of knights, and harass them until they have passed beyond the weird dominion. Then all the witchcraft vanishes, and the fruitful open country is spread before their sight. Envy and mediocrity have also their sorceries; but we ought to march on towards the truth, without caring for the seeming obstacles that impede our progress.

When Keppler had discovered the harmonic laws that regulate the motion of the heavenly bodies, it was thus that he expressed his joy:—"At length, after the lapse of "eighteen months, the first dawn of light "has shone upon me; and on this remark-"able day I have perceived the pure irradia-"tion of sublime truth. Nothing now re-"presses me; I dare yield myself up to my "holy ardour; I dare insult mankind by "acknowledging, that I have turned worldly "science to advantage; that I have robbed "the vessels of Egypt, to erect a temple to "the living God. If I am pardoned, I shall "rejoice; if blamed, I shall endure it. The

" die is cast; I have written this book:—
" whether it be read by posterity, or by my
" contemporaries, is of no consequence; it
" may well wait for a reader during one
" century, when God himself, during six
" thousand years, has waited for an observer
" like myself." This bold ebullition of a proud enthusiasm exhibits the internal force of genius.

Goëthe has made a remark upon the perfectibility of the human understanding, which is full of sagacity—" It is always advancing,
" but in a spiral line."—This comparison is so much the more just, because the improvement of man seems to be checked at many æras, and then returns upon its own steps, having gained some degrees in advance.—There are seasons when scepticism is necessary to the progress of the sciences; there are others when, according to Hemsterhuis, *the marvellous spirit ought to supersede the mathematical.* When man is swallowed up, or rather reduced into dust by infidelity, this marvellous spirit can alone restore the power of admiration to the soul, without which we cannot understand nature.

The theory of the sciences in Germany has given the men of genius an impulse like

that which metaphysics had excited in the study of the mind; and life holds the same rank in physical phænomena, that the will holds in moral order. If the relations between these two systems have caused certain persons to interdict them both, there are those who will discover in these relations the double guarantee of the same truth. It is at least certain, that the interest of the sciences is singularly increased by this manner of referring them all to some leading ideas. Poets might find in the sciences a crowd of useful thoughts, if the sciences held communication with each other in the philosophy of the universe; and if this philosophy, instead of being abstract, was animated by the inexhaustible source of sentiment. The universe resembles a poem more than a machine; and if, in order to form a conception of the universe, we were compelled to avail ourselves of imagination, or of a mathematical spirit, imagination would lead us nearer to the truth. But again let me repeat, we must not make such a choice; since it is the *totality* of our moral being which ought to be employed in so important a kind of meditation.

The new system of general physics, which

in Germany serves for a guide to experimental physics, can only be judged by its results. We must see whether it will conduct the human mind to new-established truths. But it is impossible to deny the connexion which it proves to exist between the different branches of study. One student usually revolts from the other when their occupations are different, because they are a reciprocal annoyance. The scholar has nothing to say to the poet; the poet to the natural philosopher: and even among the men of science, those who are differently occupied avoid each other; taking no interest in what is out of their own circle. This cannot be when a central philosophy establishes connexions of a sublime nature between all our thoughts. The scientific penetrate nature by the aid of imagination. Poets find in the sciences the genuine beauties of the universe. The learned enrich poetry with the stores of recollection, and the men of science with those of analogy.

The sciences, represented as insulated, and as a land unknown to the soul, attract not the exalted mind. The greater part of those who have devoted themselves to the sciences (with some honourable exceptions) have imprinted upon our times that tendency towards

calculation which so well teaches us, in all changes, which is the strongest government. The German philosophy introduces the physical sciences into that universal sphere of ideas, which imparts so much interest to the most minute observations, as well as to the most important results.

CHAPTER XI.

Influence of the new Philosophy upon the Character of the Germans.

It would appear that a system of philosophy, which attributes an all-powerful action to that which depends upon ourselves, namely, to our will, ought to strengthen the character, and to make it independent of external circumstances; but there is reason to believe, that political and religious institutions alone can create public spirit, and that no abstract theory is efficacious enough to give a nation energy: for, it must be confessed, the Germans of our days have not *that* which can be called character. They are virtuous, upright, as private men, as fathers of families, as managers of affairs: but their gracious and complaisant forwardness to support the cause of power gives especial pain to those who love them, and who believe them to be the most enlightened speculative defenders of the dignity of man.

The sagacity of the philosophical spirit

alone has taught them in all circumstances the cause and the effects of what happens; and they fancy, when they have found a theory for a fact, that it is all right. Military spirit and patriotism have exalted many nations to the highest possible degree of energy; but these two sources of self-devotion hardly exist among the Germans, taken in a mass. They scarcely know any thing of military spirit, but a pedantic sort of tactics, which sanctions their being defeated according to the rules; and as little of liberty, beyond that subdivision into petty kingdoms, which, by accustoming the inhabitants to consider themselves weak as a nation, soon leads them to be weak as individuals. Respect for forms is very favourable to the support of law; but this respect, such as it exists in Germany, induces the habit of such punctual and precise proceedings, that they hardly know how to open a new path to reach an object though it be straight before them.

Philosophical speculations are only suited to a small number of thinking men; and far from serving to combine the strength of a nation, they only place the ignorant and the enlightened at too great a distance from each

other. There are too many new, and not enough common, ideas circulating in Germany, for the knowledge of men and things. Common ideas are necessary for the conduct of life; business requires the spirit of execution rather than that of invention: whatever is odd in the different modes of thinking in Germany, tends to separate them from each other; for the thoughts and interests which unite men together must be of a simple nature, and of striking truth.

Contempt of danger, of suffering, and of death, is not sufficiently universal in all the classes of the German nation. Doubtless, life has more value for men capable of sentiments and ideas, than for those who leave behind them neither trace nor remembrance; but, at the same time that poetical enthusiasm gathers fresh vigour from the highest degree of learning, rational courage ought to fill the place of the instinct of ignorance. It belongs alone to philosophy, founded upon religion, to inspire an unalterable resolution under all contingencies.

If, however, Philosophy has not appeared to be all-powerful in this respect in Germany; we must not therefore despise her;—she supports, she enlightens every man, indi-

vidually; but a government alone can excite that moral electricity which makes the whole nation feel the same sentiment. We are more offended with the Germans, when we see them deficient in energy, than with the Italians, whose political situation has enfeebled their character for several centuries. The Italians, through the whole of life, by their grace and their imagination, preserve a sort of prolonged right to childhood; but the rude physiognomy and manners of the Germans appear to promise a manly soul, and we are disagreeably surprised not to find it. In a word, timidity of character is pardoned when it is confessed; and in this way the Italians have a peculiar frankness, which excites a kind of interest in their favour; while the Germans, not daring to avow that weakness which suits so ill with them, are energetic flatterers and vigorous slaves. They give a harsh accent to their words, to hide the suppleness of their opinions; and they make use of philosophical reasonings to explain that which is the most unphilosophical thing in the world—respect for power, and the effeminacy of fear, which turns that respect into admiration.

To such contrasts as these we must attri-

bute that German *gracelessness* which it is the fashion to mimic in the comedies of all countries. It is allowable to be heavy and stiff, while we remain severe and firm; but, if this natural stiffness be clothed with the false smile of servility, then all that remains is to be exposed to merited ridicule. In short, there is a certain want of address in the German character, prejudicial even to those who have the selfish intent of sacrificing every thing to their interest; and we are so much the more provoked with them, because they lose the honours of virtue, without attaining the profits of adroit management.

While we confess the German philosophy to be inadequate to form a nation, we must also acknowledge that the disciples of the new school are much nearer than any of the others to the attainment of strength of character: they dream of it, they desire it, they conceive it; but they often fail in the pursuit. There are few Germans who can even write upon politics. The greater portion of those who meddle with this subject are systematic, and frequently unintelligible. When we are busied with the transcendental metaphysics —when we attempt to plunge into the darkness of nature, any view, however indefi-

nite it may be, is not to be despised; every presentiment may guide us; every approach to the mark is something. It is not thus with the affairs of the world; it is possible to know them; it is necessary, therefore, to foresee them clearly. Obscurity of style, when we treat of thoughts without bounds, is sometimes the very indication of a comprehensive understanding; but obscurity, in our analysis of the affairs of life, only proves that we do not comprehend them.

When we introduce metaphysics into business, they confound, for the sake of excusing every thing; and we thus provide a dark fog for the asylum of conscience.—This employment of metaphysics would require address, if every thing was not reduced in our times to two very simple and clear ideas, interest or duty. Men of energy, whichever of these two directions they follow, go right onward to the mark, without embracing theories which no longer deceive nor persuade any body.

"See then," it may be said, "you are re-"duced to extol, like us, the names of expe-"rience and observation."—I have never denied that both were necessary for those who meddle with the interests of this world;

but it is in the conscience of man that we ought to find the ideal principle of a conduct externally directed by sage calculations. Divine sentiments are subject here below to earthly things; it is the condition of our existence. The beautiful is within our souls, and the struggle is without. We must fight for the cause of eternity, but with the weapons of time; no individual can attain the whole dignity of the human character, either by speculative philosophy, or by the knowledge of affairs, exclusively; and free institutions alone have the advantage of building up a system of public morals in a nation, and of giving exalted sentiments an opportunity of displaying themselves in the practical conduct of life.

CHAPTER XII.

Of the moral System, founded upon personal Interest.

THE French writers have been perfectly right in considering morality founded upon interest, as the consequence of that metaphysical system which attributed all our ideas to our sensations. If there is nothing in the soul but what sensation has introduced, the agreeable, or the disagreeable, ought to be the sole motive of our volitions. Helvetius, Didelot, Saint-Lambert, have not deviated from this direction; and they have explained all actions (including the devotion of martyrs) by self-love. The English, who for the most part profess the experimental philosophy in metaphysics, have yet never brought themselves to support a moral system founded upon interest. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Smith, &c. have declared the moral sense and sympathy to be the source of all virtue. Hume himself, the most sceptical of the English philosophers, could

not read without disgust this theory of self-love, which deformed the beauty of the soul. Nothing is more opposite than this system to the whole of their opinions in Germany: their philosophical and moral writers, in consequence (at the head of whom we must place Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi), have combated it with success.

As the tendency of man towards happiness is the most universal and active of all his inclinations, some have believed that they built morality on the most solid basis, when they said it consisted in the right understanding of our personal interest. This idea has misled men of integrity, and others have purposely abused it, and have only too well succeeded in that abuse. Doubtless, the general laws of nature and society make happiness and virtue harmonize; but their laws are subject to very numerous exceptions, and which appear to be more numerous than they really are.

By making happiness consist in a quiet conscience, we elude the arguments drawn from the prosperity of vice and the misfortunes of virtue; but this inward joy, which is entirely of a religious kind, has no relation to that which we designate upon earth by

the name of happiness. To call self-devotion or selfishness, guilt or innocence, our personal interest, well or ill understood, is to aim at filling up that abyss which separates the criminal from the virtuous; is to destroy respect; is to weaken indignation:—for if morality is nothing but right calculation, he who wants it can only be accused of a flaw in his understanding. It is impossible to feel the noble sentiment of esteem for any one because he is an accurate accountant; nor an energetic contempt for him who errs in his arithmetic. Men have arrived, therefore, by means of this system, at the principal end of all the profligate, who wish to put justice and injustice upon a level, or, at least, to consider both as a game well or ill played:—the philosophers of this school, accordingly, more frequently use the word Fault than Crime; for, in their mode of thinking, there is nothing in the conduct of life but skilful or unskilful combinations.

We can form no better conception how remorse can be admitted into such a system:—the criminal, when he is punished, ought to feel that sort of regret which is occasioned by the failure of a speculation; for if our individual happiness is our principal object,

if we are the only end of ourselves, peace must soon be restored between these two near allies—he who has done wrong, and he who suffers from it. It is a proverb almost universally admitted, that every one is free in all that concerns himself alone: now, as in the moral system, founded upon interest, self is the only question, I know not what answer could be returned to such a speech as the following:—"You give me, as the "motive for my actions, my own individual "benefit—I am much obliged: but the man- "ner of conceiving what this benefit is, "necessarily depends upon the variety of "character. I am courageous; I can there- "fore risk the dangers attached to an infrac- "tion of the laws better than another:—I "am ingenious; therefore I trust to more "means of escaping punishment:—lastly, if "it turns out ill, I have sufficient fortitude "to endure the consequences of having de- "ceived myself; and I prefer the pleasures "and the chances of high play to the mo- "notony of a regular existence."

How many French works, in the last age, have commented upon these arguments, which cannot be completely refuted; for, in a matter of chance, one out of a thousand is

sufficient to rouse the imagination to every effort for obtaining it; and, certainly, the odds are not a thousand to one against the success of vice. "But" (many of the honest partisans of the moral system founded upon interest will say) "this morality does "not exclude the influence of religion over "the soul." How weak and melancholy a part is left for it! When all the acknowledged philosophical and moral systems are contrary to religion—when metaphysics annihilate the belief of what is invisible, and morals the sacrifice of ourselves, religion remains, in our ideas, as the King remained in that constitution which was decreed by the Constituent Assembly; it was a Republic, with a King; and I say the same of all these systems of metaphysical materialism and selfish morality—they are Atheism, with a God. It is easy, then, to foresee what will be sacrificed in the construction of our thoughts, when we only assign a superfluous place to the central idea of the world and of ourselves.

The conduct of man is not truly moral, excepting when he esteems as nothing the happy or unhappy consequences of those actions which his duty has enjoined him.—

In directing the affairs of the world, we must always keep in our minds the connexion of causes and effects, of the means and the end; but this prudence is to virtue what good sense is to genius:—all that is truly beautiful is inspired; all that is disinterested is religious. Calculation is the labourer of genius, the servant of the soul; but if it becomes the master, there is no longer any thing grand or noble in man. Calculation, in the conduct of life, ought always to be admitted as the guide, but never as the motive of our actions. It is a good instrument of execution; but the source of the will ought to be of a more elevated nature, and to contain in itself an internal sentiment which compels us to the sacrifice of our personal interests.

When an attempt was made to prevent St. Vincent de Paul from exposing himself to too great danger, in order to succour the unfortunate, he replied, "Do you think me "so base as to prefer my life to myself?"—If the advocates of the moral system founded upon interest would retrench from this interest all that concerns earthly existence, they would then agree with the most religious men; but still we might reproach them

with the faulty expressions in which they convey their meaning.

"In fact," it may be said, "this is only "a dispute about words; we call useful what "you call virtuous, but *we* also place the "well-understood interest of men in the "sacrifice of their passions to their duties." Disputes about words are always disputes about things; for every man of honesty will confess, that he only uses this or that word from preference for this or that idea. How should expressions, habitually employed upon the most vulgar matters, be capable of inspiring generous sentiments? When we pronounce the words Interest and Utility, shall we excite the same thoughts in our hearts, as when we adjure each other in the name of Devotion, and of Virtue?

When Sir Thomas More preferred perishing on the scaffold to re-ascending the summit of greatness, by the sacrifice of a scruple of conscience; when, after a year's imprisonment, enfeebled by suffering, he refused to return to the wife and children whom he loved, and to give himself up again to those mental occupations which confer so much vivacity, and at the same time so much tranquillity upon existence; when honour alone,

that worldly religion, made an aged King of France return to an English prison, because his son had not kept the promises by means of which he obtained his liberty; when Christians lived in catacombs, renounced the light of day, and felt the heavens only in their souls; if any one had said, "they had "a right understanding of their interest," what an icy chill would have run through the veins at hearing such a speech, and how much better would a compassionate look have revealed to us all that is sublime in such characters!

No, assuredly, life is not such a withered thing as selfishness has made it; all is not prudence, all is not calculation; and when a sublime action agitates all the powers of our nature, we do not consider whether the generous man, who sacrifices himself for a manifest good purpose, judiciously calculated his personal interest; we think that he sacrifices all the pleasures, all the advantages of this world; but that a celestial ray descends into his heart, and excites a happiness within him, which has no more resemblance to what we usually adorn with that name, than immortality has to life.

It was not, however, without a motive,

that so much importance has been attached to this system of morals founded upon personal interest. Those who support it have the air of supporting a theory only; and it is, in fact, a very ingenious contrivance, for the purpose of rivetting the yoke of every species. No man, however depraved he may be, will deny the necessity of morality; for the very being who is most decidedly deficient in it, would wish to be concerned with those dupes who maintain it. But what address was there in fixing upon prudence as the basis of morality; what an opening it makes for the ascendency of power over the transactions of conscience, over all the springs in the human mind by which events are regulated!

If calculation ought to preside over every thing, the actions of men will be judged according to their success; the man whose good feelings have been the cause of misfortune, will be justly condemned; the corrupt, but adroit manager, will be justly commended. In a word, individuals, only considering each other as obstacles or instruments, will hate those who impede them, and will esteem those who serve them, only as means of their success. Guilt itself has

more grandeur when it arises from the disorder of inflamed passion, than when personal interest is its object; how then allege that to be the principle of virtue which would dishonour vice itself*!

* In Bentham's work on Legislation, published, or rather illustrated, by M. Dumont, there are several arguments on the principle of utility, which agree in many respects with the system of morals founded upon personal interest. The well-known anecdote of Aristides making the Athenians reject a project of Themistocles, by simply telling them it was advantageous but unjust, is quoted by M. Dumont; but he refers the consequences which may be drawn from this trait of character, as well as many others, to the general utility admitted by Bentham as the basis of all our duties. The advantage of each individual, he says, ought to be sacrificed to the advantage of the whole; and that of the present moment to futurity, by taking one step in advance: we may confess, that virtue consists in the sacrifice of time to eternity, and this sort of calculation will certainly not be condemned by the advocates for enthusiasm; but whatever effort so superior a man as M. Dumont may make, he never will be able to render utility and self-devotion synonymous. He asserts, that pleasure and pain are the first motives of human actions; and he then supposes that the pleasure of noble minds consists in voluntarily exposing themselves to the sufferings of real life, in order to obtain enjoyments of a higher nature. Doubtless, we may make out of every word a mirror to reflect all ideas; but, if we are pleased to adhere to the natural signification of each term, we shall perceive, that the man who is told that his own happiness ought to be the end of all his actions, will not be prevented from doing the evil which is expedient for him, except by the fear or the danger of punishment;—fear, that passion braves; danger, that ingenuity hopes to escape. Upon

what will you found the idea of justice or injustice, it may be said, if not upon what is useful or hurtful to the greater number? Justice, as to individuals, consists in the sacrifice of themselves to their families; as to families, in their sacrifice to the state; as to the state, in the respect for certain unchangeable principles which constitute the happiness and the safety of the human species. Doubtless, the majority of the generations of men, in the course of ages, will find their account in having followed the path of justice; but, in order to be truly and religiously honest, we ought always to keep in view the worship of moral beauty, independently of all the circumstances which may result from it. Utility is necessarily modified by events; virtue ought never to be liable to this influence.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of the moral System, founded upon national Interest.

Not only does the moral system founded upon personal interest introduce into the mutual relations of individuals calculations of prudence and selfishness, which banish sympathy, confidence, and generosity; but the morals of public men, of those who act in the name of nations, must necessarily be perverted by this system. If it is true that the morals of individuals may be founded upon their interest, it is because the entire society tends to order, and punishes those who violate it; but a nation, and especially a powerful state, is an isolated existence, to which the laws of reciprocity cannot be applied. It may be said, with truth, that at the end of a certain number of years unjust nations yield to the hatred which their injustice inspires; but several generations may pass away before these great crimes are punished; and I know not how we could convince a statesman,

under all circumstances, that an action, blameable in itself, is not useful, and that political wisdom and morality are ever in accord:—this point, therefore, is not proved; and, on the contrary, it is almost a received axiom, that the two objects cannot be united.

Nevertheless, what would become of the human race if morality was nothing but an old woman's tale, invented to console the weak until they become stronger? How should it be honoured in the private relations of life, if the government, upon which all turn their eyes, is allowed to dispense with it? and how should this not be allowed, if interest is the foundation of morals? Nobody can deny that there are contingencies, in which those great masses called empires (those great masses which are in a state of nature with relation to each other) find a momentary advantage in committing an act of injustice; and what is momentary with regard to nations, is often a whole age.

Kant, in his writings on political morality, shows, with the greatest force, that no exception can be admitted in the code of duty. In short, when we rely upon circumstances for the justification of an immoral action,

upon what principle can we stop at this or that point? Would not the more impetuous of our natural passions be of much greater power than the calculations of reason, if we admitted public or private interest as an excuse for injustice?

When, at the most bloody æra of the Revolution, they wished to authorize all crimes, they gave their government the name of the Committee of Public Safety—this was to illustrate the received maxim, that the safety of the people is the supreme law—the supreme law is justice. When it shall be proved that the earthly interests of a nation may be promoted by an act of meanness or of injustice, we shall still be equally vile and criminal in committing it; for the integrity of moral principles is of more consequence than the interests of nations. Individuals, and societies, are answerable, in the first place, for that divine inheritance which ought to be transmitted to the successive generations of mankind. Loftiness of mind, generosity, equity, every magnanimous sentiment, in a word, ought first to be preserved, at our own expense, and even at the expense of others; since they, as well as we, are bound to sacrifice themselves to their sentiments.

Injustice always sacrifices one portion of society to another. According to what arithmetical calculation is this sacrifice enjoined? Can the majority dispose of the minority, if the former only exceeds the latter by a few voices? The members of one and the same family, a company of merchants, nobles, ecclesiastics, whatever may be their numbers, have not the right of saying that every thing ought to yield to their several interests: but when any assembly of men, let it be as inconsiderable as that of the Romans in their origin; when this assembly, I say, calls itself a nation, then it should be allowed to do any thing for its own advantage! This term Nation would thus become synonymous with that of *Legion*, which the devil assumes in the Gospel; but there is no more reason for giving up the obligations of duty for the sake of a nation, than for that of any other collective body of men. It is not the number of individuals which constitutes their importance in a moral point of view. When an innocent person dies on the scaffold; whole generations attend to his misfortune; while thousands perish in a battle without any inquiry after their fate. Whence arises this astonishing dif-

ference which men make between an act of injustice committed against an individual, and the death of numbers? The cause is, the importance which all attach to the moral law; it is of a thousand times more consequence than physical life in the universe, and in the soul of each of us, which also is itself an universe.

If we make morality only a calculation of prudence and wisdom, a species of economical management, there is something like energy in not wishing to possess it. A sort of ridicule attaches to persons of condition, who still maintain what are called romantic maxims, fidelity in our engagements, respect for the rights of individuals, &c. We forgive these scruples in the case of individuals who are independent enough to be dupes at their own expense; but when we consider those who direct the affairs of nations, there are circumstances in which they may be blamed for being just, and have their integrity objected to them; for if private morals are founded upon personal interest, there is much more reason for public morals to be founded upon national interest; and these morals, upon occasion, may make a duty of the greatest crimes: so easy is it to reduce to an

absurdity whatever wanders from the simple grounds of truth. Rousseau said, "that it "was not allowable for a nation to purchase "the most desirable revolution with the "blood of one innocent person:" these simple words comprehend all that is true, sacred, divine, in the destiny of man.

It assuredly was not for the advantages of this life, to secure some additional enjoyments to some days of existence, and to delay a little the death of some dying creatures, that conscience and religion were bestowed upon man. It was for this, that beings in possession of free will might choose justice, and sacrifice utility; might prefer the future to the present, the invisible to the visible, and the dignity of the human species to the mere preservation of individuals.

Individuals are virtuous when they sacrifice their private interest to the general good; but governments, in their turn, are individuals, who ought to sacrifice their personal advantages to the law of duty: if the morals of statesmen were only founded on the public good, their morals might lead them into sin, if not always, at least sometimes; and a single justified exception would be sufficient to annihilate all the morality in

the world; for all true principles are absolute: if two and two do not make four, the deepest algebraic computations are absurd; and if, in theory, there is a single case in which a man *ought not to do his duty*, every philosophical and religious maxim is overturned, and nothing remains but prudence or hypocrisy.

Let me be permitted to adduce the example of my father, since it is directly applicable to the point in question. It has been often repeated, that M. Necker was ignorant of human nature, because on many occasions he refused to avail himself of means of corruption or violence, the advantages of which were believed to be certain. I may venture to say, that nobody can read the works of M. Necker, entitled, "The History of the "French Revolution," — "The Executive "Power in great Governments," &c. without finding in them enlightened views of the human heart; and I shall not be contradicted by any of those who have lived in intimacy with M. Necker, when I assert, that, notwithstanding his admirable goodness of disposition, he had to guard himself against a too lively talent for ridicule, and rather a severe mode of estimating mediocrity

of mind and soul: what he has written upon the "Happiness of Fools" appears to me enough to prove it. In a word, as, in addition to all these qualities, he was eminently a man of wit, nobody surpassed him in the delicate and profound knowledge of those with whom he was connected; but he was determined, by a decision of his conscience, never to shrink from any consequences whatever, which might result from an obedience to the commands of duty. We may judge differently concerning the events of the French Revolution; but I believe it to be impossible for an impartial observer to deny that such a principle, generally adopted, would have saved France from the misfortunes under which she has groaned, and from, what is still worse, the example which she has displayed.

During the most fatal epochs of the reign of terror, many honest men accepted offices in the administration, and even in the criminal tribunals, either to do good, or to diminish the evil which was committed in them; and all defended themselves by a mode of reasoning very generally received—that they prevented a villain from occupying the place they filled, and thus rendered service to the

oppressed. To allow ourselves the use of bad means for an end which we believe to be good, is a maxim of conduct singularly vicious in its principle. Men know nothing of the future, nothing of themselves with respect to the morrow; in every circumstance, and at every moment, duty is imperative, and the calculations of wisdom, as to consequences which it may foresee, ought to be of no account in the estimate of duty.—What right have those who were the instruments of a seditious authority to keep the title of honest men, because they committed unjust actions in a gentle manner? Rudeness in the execution of injustice would have been much better, for the difficulty of supporting it would have increased; and the most mischievous of all alliances is that of a sanguinary decree and a polite executioner.

The benevolence we may exercise in detail is no compensation for the evil which we cause by lending the support of our names to the party that uses them. We ought to profess the worship of virtue upon earth, in order that not only our contemporaries, but our posterity, may feel its influence. The ascendency of a brave example endures many years after the objects of a transitory charity

have ceased to exist. The most important lesson that we can inculcate into man in this world, and particularly with relation to public affairs, is, not to compromise duty for any consideration.

"When we set about bargaining with cir-
" cumstances, all is lost; for there is nobody
" who cannot plead this excuse. One has a
" wife, children, or nephews, who are in need
" of fortunes; others want active employ-
" ment; or allege I know not what virtuous
" pretexts, which all lead to the necessity of
" their having a place, to which money and
" power are attached. Are we not weary of
" these subterfuges, of which the Revolution
" furnished incessant examples? We met
" none but persons who complained of
" having been forced to quit the repose they
" preferred to every thing—that domestic life
" into which they were impatient to return;
" and we were well aware, that these very
" persons had employed their days and nights
" in praying that they might be obliged to
" devote their days and nights to public
" affairs, which could have entirely dispensed
" with their services *."

* This is the passage which gave the greatest offence to the Literary Police.

The ancient lawgivers made it a duty for the citizens to be concerned in political interests. The Christian religion ought to inspire a disposition of entirely another nature; that of obeying authority, but of keeping ourselves detached from the affairs of state, when they may compromise our conscience. The difference which exists between the ancient and modern governments explains this opposite manner of considering the relations of men towards their country.

The political science of the ancients was intimately united with their religion and morals; the social state was a body full of life. Every individual considered himself as one of its members. The smallness of states, the number of slaves, which still further contracted that of the citizens, all made it a duty to act for a country which had need of every one of its children. Magistrates, warriors, artists, philosophers, almost the gods themselves, mingled together upon the public arena; and the same men by turns gained a battle, exhibited a masterpiece of art, gave laws to their country, or endeavoured to discover the laws of the universe.

If we make an exception of the very small number of free governments, the greatness

of modern states, and the concentration of monarchical power, have rendered politics entirely negative, if we may so express ourselves. The business is, to prevent one person from annoying another; and government is charged with the high sort of police, which permits every one to enjoy the advantages of peace and social order, while he purchases this security by reasonable sacrifices. The divine Lawgiver of mankind, therefore, enjoined that morality which was most adapted to the situation of the world under the Roman empire, when he laid down as a law the payment of tributes, and submission to government in all that duty does not forbid; but he also recommended a life of privacy in the strongest manner.

Men who are ever desirous of theorizing their peculiar inclinations, adroitly confound ancient and Christian morals. It is necessary, they say (like the ancients), to serve our country, and to be useful citizens in the state; it is necessary, they say (like the Christians), to submit ourselves to power established by the will of God. It is thus that a mixture of the system of quietness with that of action produces a double immorality; when, taken singly, they had

both claims to respect. The activity of the Greek and Roman citizens, such as it could be exercised in a republic, was a noble virtue. The force of Christian quietness is also a virtue, and one of great power; for Christianity, which is accused of weakness, is invincible in its own spirit, that is to say, in the energy of refusal. But the tricking selfishness of ambitious men teaches them the art of combining opposite arguments; so that they can meddle with every thing like Pagans, and submit to every thing like Christians.

"The universe, my friend, regards not thee,"

is, however, what we may say to all the universe, phænomena excepted. It would be a truly ridiculous vanity to assign as a motive for political activity in all cases, the pretext of that service which we may render our country. This sort of usefulness is hardly ever more than a pompous name, which covers personal interest.

The art of sophists has always been to oppose one duty to another. We incessantly imagine circumstances in which this frightful perplexity may exist. The greater part of dramatic fictions are founded upon it.

Yet real life is more simple; we there frequently see virtues opposed to interests; but perhaps it is true, that no honest man could ever doubt, on any occasion, what his duty enjoined. The voice of conscience is so delicate, that it is easy to stifle it; but it is so clear, that it is impossible to mistake it.

A known maxim contains, under a simple form, all the theory of morals, "Do what "you ought, happen what will." When we decide, on the contrary, that the probity of a public man consists in sacrificing every thing to the temporal advantages of his nation, then many occasions may be found, in which we may become immoral by our morality. This sophism is as contradictory in its substance as in its form: this would be to treat virtue as a conjectural science, and as entirely submitted to circumstances in its application. May God guard the human heart from such a responsibility! the light of our understanding is too uncertain, to enable us to judge of the moment when the eternal laws of duty may be suspended; or, rather, this moment does not exist.

If it was once generally acknowledged, that national interest itself ought to be

subordinate to those nobler thoughts which constitute virtue, how would the conscientious man be at his ease! how would every thing in politics appear clear to him, when, before, a continual hesitation made him tremble at every step! It is this very hesitation which has caused honest men to be thought incapable of state-affairs; they have been accused of pusillanimity, of weakness, of fear; and, on the contrary, those who have carelessly sacrificed the weak to the powerful, and their scruples to their interests, have been called men *of an energetic nature.* It is, however, an easy energy which tends to our own advantage; or, at least, to that of the ruling faction; for every thing that is done according to the sense of the multitude invariably partakes of weakness, let it appear ever so violent.

The race of men, with a loud voice, demand the sacrifice of every thing to their interest; and finish by compromising this interest from the very wish for such a sacrifice: but it should now be inculcated into them, that their happiness itself, which has been made so general a pretext, is not sacred, excepting in its compatibility with morals; for, without morals, of what sense

quence would the whole body be to each individual? When once we have said that morals ought to be sacrificed to national interest, we are very liable to contract the sense of the word Nation from day to day, and to make it signify at first our own partisans, then our friends, and then our family; which is but a decent synonyme for ourselves.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of the Principle of Morals in the new German Philosophy.

THE ideal philosophy has a tendency, from its very nature, to refute the moral system, founded upon individual or national interest: it does not allow temporal happiness to be the end of our existence; and, referring every thing to the life of the soul, it is to the exercise of the will, and of virtue, that it attaches our thoughts and actions. The works which Kant has written upon morals have a reputation at least equal to those which he has composed upon metaphysics.

Two distinct inclinations, he says, appear manifest in man: personal interest, which he derives from the attraction of his sensations; and universal justice, which arises from his relations to the human race, and to the Divinity: between these two impulses Conscience decides; she resembles Minerva, who made the balance incline, when the votes were equal in the Areopagus. Have

not the most opposite opinions facts for their support? Would not "the for" and "the "against" be equally true, if Conscience did not carry with her the supreme certainty?

Man, who is placed between visible and almost equal arguments, which direct the circumstances of his life in favour of good or evil; man has received from Heaven the sentiment of duty, to decide his choice. Kant endeavours to demonstrate that this sentiment is the necessary condition of our moral being; the truth which precedes all those, the knowledge of which is acquired by life. Can it be denied that conscience has more dignity, when we believe it to be an innate power, than when we consider it in the light of a faculty acquired, like all others, by experience and habit? And it is in this point, especially, that the ideal metaphysics exert a great influence over the moral conduct of man: they attribute the same primitive force to the notion of duty as to that of space and time; and, considering them both as inherent in our nature, they admit no more doubt of one than of the other.

All our esteem for ourselves and for others must be founded on the relations which

exist between our actions and the law of duty; this law depends, in no case, on the desire of happiness; on the contrary, it is often summoned to combat that desire. Kant goes still farther; he affirms, that the first effect of the power of virtue is to cause a noble pain by the sacrifices which it demands.

The destination of man upon this earth is not happiness, but the advance towards moral perfection. It is in vain that, by a childish play of words, this improvement is called happiness; we clearly feel the difference between enjoyments and sacrifices; and if language was to adopt the same terms for such discordant ideas, our natural judgment would reject the deception.

It has been often said, that human nature had a tendency towards happiness: this is its involuntary instinct; but the instinct of reflection is virtue. By giving man very little influence over his own happiness, and means of improvement without number, the intention of the Creator was surely not to make the object of our lives an almost unattainable end. Devote all your powers to the attainment of happiness; control your character, if you can, to such a degree as not to feel those wandering desires, which

nothing can satisfy; and, in spite of all these wise arrangements of self-love, you will be afflicted with disorders, you will be ruined, you will be imprisoned, and all the edifice of your selfish cares will be overturned.

It may be replied to this—"I will be so "circumspect, that I will not have any ene- "mies." Let it be so; you will not have to reproach yourself with any acts of generous imprudence; but sometimes we have seen the least courageous among the persecuted. "I will manage my fortune so well, "that I will preserve it."—I believe it;—but there are universal disasters, which do not spare even those whose principle has been never to expose themselves for others; and illness, and accidents of every kind, dispose of our condition in spite of ourselves. How then should happiness be the end of our moral liberty in this short life; happiness, which chance, suffering, old age, and death, put out of our power? The case is not the same with moral improvement; every day, every hour, every minute, may contribute to it; all fortunate and unfortunate events equally assist it; and this work depends entirely on ourselves, whatever may be our situation upon earth.

The moral system of Kant and Fichte is very analogous to that of the Stoics; but the Stoics allowed more to the ascendency of natural qualities; the Roman pride is discoverable in their manner of estimating mankind. The disciples of Kant believe in the necessary and continual action of the will against evil inclinations. They tolerate no exceptions in our obedience to duty, and reject all excuses which can act as motives to such exceptions.

The theory of Kant concerning veracity is an example of this; he rightly considers it as the basis of all morality. When the Son of God called himself the Logos, or the Word, perhaps he wished to do honour to that admirable faculty in language of revealing what we think. Kant has carried his respect for truth so far, as not to permit a violation of it, even if a villain came and demanded, whether your friend, whom he pursued, was hidden in your house. He pretends, that we ought never to allow ourselves, in any particular instance, to do that which would be inadmissible as a general law; but, on this occasion, he forgets that we may make a general law of not sacrificing truth, excepting to another virtue; for, as soon as

personal interest is removed from a question, we need not fear sophisms, and conscience pronounces with equity upon all things.

The theory of Kant in morals is severe, and sometimes dry; for it excludes sensibility. He regards it as a reflex act of sensation, and as certain to lead to passions in which there is always a mixture of selfishness; it is on this account that he does not admit sensibility for a guide, and that he places morals under the safeguard of unchangeable principles. There is nothing more severe than this doctrine; but there is a severity which softens us, even when it treats the impulses of the heart as objects of suspicion, and endeavours to banish them all: however rigorous a moralist may be, when he addresses our conscience, he is sure to touch us. He who says to man—Find every thing in yourself—always raises up in the soul some noble object, which is connected with that very sensibility whose sacrifice it demands. In studying the philosophy of Kant, we must distinguish sentiment from sensibility; he admits the former as the judge of philosophical truth; he considers the latter as properly subject to the conscience. Sentiment and conscience are terms employed almost

as synonymes in his writings; but sensibility approaches much nearer to the sphere of emotions, and consequently to that of the passions, which they originate.

We cannot grow weary of admiring those writings of Kant, in which the supreme law of duty is held up as sacred: what genuine warmth, what animated eloquence, upon a subject, where the only ordinary endeavour is restraint! We feel penetrated with a profound respect for the austerity of an aged philosopher, constantly submitted to the invisible power of virtue, which has no empire but that of conscience, no arms but those of remorse; no treasures to distribute but the inward enjoyments of the soul; the hope of which cannot be offered as a motive for their attainment, because they are incomprehensible until they are experienced.

Among the German philosophers, some men of virtue, not inferior to Kant, and who approach nearer to religion in their inclinations, have attributed the origin of the moral law to religious sentiment. This sentiment cannot be of the nature of those which may grow into passions. Seneca has depicted its calmness and profundity, by saying, "In the bosom of the virtuous man I

"know not what God, but a God has ha-
"bitation."

Kant pretended, that it was to impair the disinterested purity of morals, to present the perspective of a future life, as the end of our actions: many German writers have completely refuted him on this point. In effect, the immortality of heaven has no relation to the rewards and punishments, of which we form an idea on this earth. The sentiment which makes us aspire to immortality is as disinterested as that which makes us find our happiness in devoting ourselves to the happiness of others; for the first offering to religious felicity is the sacrifice of self; and it is thus necessarily removed from every species of selfishness. Whatever we may attempt, we must return to the acknowledgment, that religion is the true foundation of morality; it is that sensible and real object within us, which can alone divert our attention from external objects. If piety did not excite sublime emotions, who would sacrifice even sensual pleasures, however vulgar they might be, to the cold dignity of reason? We must begin the internal history of man with religion, or with sensation: there is nothing animated besides.

The moral system, founded upon personal interest, would be as evident as a mathematical truth, were it not for its exercising more control over the passions which overturn all calculations: nothing but a sentiment can triumph over a sentiment; the violence of nature can only be conquered by its exaltation. Reasoning, in such a case, is like the schoolmaster in Fontaine; nobody listens to him, and all the world is crying out for help.

Jacobi, as I shall show in the analysis of his works, has opposed the arguments which Kant uses, in order to avoid the admission of religious sentiment as the basis of morality. He believes, on the contrary, that the Divinity reveals himself to every man in particular, as he revealed himself to the human race, when prayers and works have prepared the heart to comprehend him. Another philosopher asserts, that immortality already commences upon this earth, for him who desires and feels in himself the taste for eternal things: another affirms, that nature forces man to understand the will of God; and that there is in the universe a groaning and imprisoned voice, which invites us to deliver the world and ourselves, by combating the principle of evil,

under all its fatal appearances. These different systems are influenced by the imagination of each writer, and are adopted by those who sympathize with him; but the general direction of these opinions is ever the same: to free the soul from the influence of external objects; to place the empire of ourselves within us; and to make duty the law of this empire, and its hope another life.

Without doubt, the true Christians have taught the same doctrine at all periods; but what distinguishes the new German school, is their uniting to all these sentiments, which they suppose to be equally inherited by the simple and ignorant, the highest philosophy and the most precise species of knowledge. The æra of pride had arrived, in which we were told, that reason and the sciences destroyed all the prospects of imagination, all the terrors of conscience, every belief of the heart; and we blushed for the half of our nature which was declared weak and almost foolish. But men have made their appearance, who, by dint of thinking, have found out the theory of all natural impressions; and, far from wishing to stifle them, they have discovered to us the noble source from which they spring. The German mo-

ralists have raised up sentiment and enthusiasm from the contempt of a tyrannical species of reason, which counted as gain only what is destroyed, and placed man and nature on the bed of Procrustes, that every part of them might be cut off, which the philosophy of materialism could not understand.

CHAPTER XV.

Of scientific Morality.

SINCE the taste for the exact sciences has taken hold of men's minds, they have wished to prove every thing by demonstration; and the calculation of probabilities allowing them to reduce even what is uncertain to rules, they have flattered themselves that they could resolve mathematically all the difficulties offered by the nicest questions; and extend the dominion of algebra over the universe. Some philosophers, in Germany, have also pretended to give to morality the advantages of a science rigorously proved in its principles as well as in its consequences, and not admitting either of objection or exception, if the first basis of it be adopted. Kant and Fichte have attempted this metaphysical labour, and Schleiermacher, the translator of Plato, and the author of several religious treatises, of which we shall speak in the next section, has published a very deep book, on the examination of different systems of

morality considered as a science. He wished to find out one, all the reasonings of which should be perfectly linked together, in which the principle should involve all the consequences, and every consequence reproduce the principle; but, at present, it does not appear that this object is attainable.

The ancients also were desirous of making a science of morality, but they included in that science laws and government: in fact, it is impossible to determine beforehand all the duties of life, when we do not know what may be required by the laws and manners of the country in which we are placed; it is in this point of view that Plato has imagined his republic. Man altogether is, in that work, considered in relation to religion, to politics, and to morality; but, as that republic could not exist, one cannot conceive how, in the midst of the abuses of human society, a code of morality, such as that would be, could supply the habitual interpretation of conscience. Philosophers aim at the scientific form in all things; one should say, they flatter themselves that they shall thus chain down the future, and withdraw themselves entirely from the yoke of circumstances: but what frees us from

them, is, the soul; the sincerity of our inward love of virtue. The science of morality can no more teach us to be honest men, in all the magnificence of that expression, than geometry to draw, or literary rules to invent.

Kant, who had admitted the necessity of sentiment in metaphysical truths, was willing to dispense with it in morality, and he was never able to establish incontestably more than this one great fact of the human heart, that morality has duty, and not interest, for its basis; but to understand duty, conscience and religion must be our teachers. Kant, in separating religion from the motives of morality, could only see in conscience a judge, and not a divine voice, and therefore he has been incessantly presenting to that judge points of difficulty; the solutions of them which he has given, and which he thought evident, have been attacked in a thousand ways; for it is by sentiment alone that we ever arrive at unanimity of opinion amongst men.

Some German philosophers, perceiving the impossibility of reducing into law all the affections of which our nature is composed, and of making a science, as it were, of all the emotions of the heart, have contented

themselves with affirming, that morality consists in a feeling of harmony within ourselves. Undoubtedly, when we feel no remorse, it is probable we are not criminal; and even when we may have committed what are faults according to the opinions of others, if we have done our duty according to our own opinion, we are not guilty; but we must nevertheless be cautious in relying on this self-satisfaction, which ought, it should seem, to be the best proof of virtue. There are men who have brought themselves to take their own pride for conscience; fanaticism, in others, is a disinterested medium, which justifies every thing in their eyes; and in some characters, the habit of committing crimes gives a kind of strength, which frees them from repentance, at least as long as they are untouched by misfortune.

It does not follow from this impossibility of discovering a science in morality, or any universal signs, by which to know whether its precepts are observed, that there are not some positive duties which may serve as our guides; but as there are in the destiny of man both necessity and liberty, so, in his conduct, there ought to be inspiration and

method. Nothing that belongs to virtue can be either altogether arbitrary, or altogether fixed: thus, it is one of the miracles of religion, that it unites, in the same degree, the exultation of love and submission to the law; thus the heart of man is at once satisfied and directed.

I shall not here give an account of all the systems of scientific morality which have been published in Germany; there are some of them so refined, that, although treating of our own nature, one does not know on what to rest for the conception of them. The French philosophers have rendered morality singularly dry, by referring every thing to self-interest. Some German metaphysicians have arrived at the same result, by nevertheless building all their doctrines on sacrifices. Neither systems of materialism, nor those of abstraction, can give a complete idea of virtue.

CHAPTER XVI.

Jacobi.

It would be difficult in any country to meet with a man of letters of a more distinguished nature than Jacobi: with every advantage of person and fortune, he devoted himself, from his youth, during forty years, to meditation. Philosophy is ordinarily a consolation or an asylum; but he who makes choice of it when circumstances concur to promise him great success in the world, is the more worthy of respect. Led by his character to acknowledge the power of sentiment, Jacobi busied himself with abstract ideas, principally to show their insufficiency. His writings on metaphysics are much esteemed in Germany; yet it is chiefly as a great moralist that his reputation is universal.

He was the first who attacked morality founded on interest; and, by assigning as the principle of his own system, religious sentiment considered philosophically, he has created a doctrine distinct from that of Kant,

who refers every thing to the inflexible law of duty, and from that of the new metaphysicians, who aim, as I have just said, at applying the strictness of science to the theory of virtue.

Schiller, in an epigram against Kant's system of morality, says, " I take pleasure " in serving my friends; it is agreeable to " me to perform my duty; that makes me " uneasy, for then I am not virtuous." This pleasantry carries with it a deep sense; for, although happiness ought never to be our object in fulfilling our duty, yet the inward satisfaction which it affords us is precisely what may be called the beatitude of virtue. This word Beatitude has lost something of its dignity: it must, however, be recurred to, for it is necessary to express that kind of impression which makes us sacrifice happiness, or at least pleasure, to a gentler and a purer state of mind.

In fact, if sentiment does not second morality, how would the latter make itself respected? How could reason and will be united together, if not by sentiment, when the will has to control the passions? A German philosopher has said, that " *there is no philo-* " *sophy but the Christian religion;*" and

certainly he did not so express himself to exclude philosophy, but because he was convinced that the highest and the deepest ideas led to the discovery of the singular agreement between that religion and the nature of man. Between these two classes of moralists, that which with Kant, and others still more abstracted, refers all the actions of morality to immutable precepts, and that which with Jacobi declares, that every thing is to be left to the decision of sentiment, Christianity seems to show the wonderful point, at which the positive law has not excluded the inspiration of the heart, nor that inspiration the positive law.

Jacobi, who has so much reason to confide in the purity of his conscience, was wrong to lay down as a principle that we should yield entirely to whatever the motions of our mind may suggest. The dryness of some intolerant writers, who admit no modification or indulgence in the application of some precepts, has driven Jacobi into the contrary excess.

When the French moralists are severe, they are so to a degree, which destroys individual character in man; it is the spirit of the nation to love authority in every thing. The German philosophers, and Jacobi above

all, respect what constitutes the particular existence of every being, and judge of actions by their source, that is to say, according to the good or bad impulse which causes them. There are a thousand ways of being a very bad man, without offending against any received law, as a detestable tragedy may be written, without any neglect of theatrical rules and effect. When the soul has no natural spring, it seeks to know what ought to be said, and what ought to be done, in every circumstance, that it may be acquitted towards itself, and towards others, by submitting to what is ordained. The law, however, in morality, as in poetry, can only teach what ought not to be done; but, in all things, what is good and sublime is only revealed to us by the divinity of our heart.

Public utility, as I have explained it in the preceding chapter, might lead us to be immoral by morality. In the relations of private life, on the contrary, it may sometimes happen, that a conduct which is perfect according to worldly estimation, may proceed from a bad principle; that is to say, may belong to something dry, malicious, and uncharitable. Natural passions and superior talents are displeasing to those men who are

too easily dignified with the name of severe: they avail themselves of their morality, which they say comes from God, as an enemy would take the sword of a father to destroy his children.

At the same time Jacobi's aversion to the inflexible rigour of law, leads him too far in freeing himself from it. "Yes," says he, "I would be a liar like the dying Desde-"mona*; I would deceive like Orestes, "when he wished to die instead of Pylades; "I would be an assassin like Timoleon; per-"jured like Epaminondas and John de Witt; "I could resolve to commit suicide like "Cato; or sacrilege like David; for I have "an assurance within me, that in pardoning "these things, which are crimes according "to the letter, man exercises the sovereign "right which the majesty of his nature con-"fers upon him; fixes the seal of his dignity, "the seal of his divine nature, to the pardon "which he grants.

"If you would establish a system universal "and strictly scientific, you must submit "conscience to that system which has pe-

* Desdemona, in order to save her husband from the disgrace and danger of the crime he has just committed, declares, as she is dying, that she has killed herself.

" trified life: that conscience must become
" deaf, dumb, and insensible; even the
" smallest remains of its root (that is, of the
" human heart) must be torn up. Yes, as
" truly as your metaphysical forms fill the
" place of Apollo and the Muses, it is only
" by imposing silence on your heart that you
" will be able implicitly to conform to laws
" without exception, and that you will adopt
" the hard and servile obedience which they
" demand: thus conscience will only serve
" to teach you, like a professor in his chair,
" the truth that is without you; and this
" inward light will soon be no more than a
" finger-post set up on the highway to direct
" travellers on their journey."

Jacobi is so well guided by his own sentiments, that perhaps he has not sufficiently reflected on the consequences of this morality to ordinary men; for what answer could be given to those who should pretend, in departing from duty, that they obey the suggestions of their conscience? Undoubtedly, we may discover that they are hypocrites who speak thus; but we have furnished them with an argument which will serve to justify them, whatever they may do; and it is a great thing for men to have

phrases to repeat in favour of their conduct: they make use of them at first to deceive others, and end with deceiving themselves.

Will it be said that this independent doctrine can only suit characters which are truly virtuous? There ought to be no privileges even for Virtue; for from the moment she desires them, it is probable she ceases to deserve them. A sublime equality reigns in the empire of duty, and something passes at the bottom of the human heart which gives to every man, when he sincerely desires it, the means of performing all that enthusiasm inspires, without transgressing the limits of the Christian law, which is also the work of an holy enthusiasm.

The doctrine of Kant may in effect be considered as too dry, because it does not attribute sufficient influence to religion; but it is not surprising that he should have been inclined not to make sentiment the base of his morality, at a time when there was so widely diffused, and especially in Germany, an affectation of sensibility, which necessarily weakened the spring of minds and characters. A genius like Kant's should have for its object, to give a new dye to the mind.

The German moralists of the new school,

so pure in their sentiments, to whatever abstract systems they abandon themselves, may be divided into three classes: those who, like Kant and Fichte, have aimed at giving to the law of duty a scientific theory, and an inflexible application; those, at the head of whom Jacobi is to be placed, who take religious sentiment and natural conscience for their guides; and those who, making revelation the basis of their belief, endeavour to unite sentiment and duty, and seek to bind them together by a philosophical interpretation. These three classes of moralists equally attack morality founded on self-interest.—That morality has now scarcely any partisans in Germany; evil actions may be done there, but at least the theory of what is right is left untouched.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of Woldemar.

THE romance of Woldemar is the work of the same philosopher, Jacobi, of whom I have spoken in the last chapter. This work contains philosophical discussions, in which the systems of morality professed by the French writers are warmly attacked, and the doctrine of Jacobi is explained in it with admirable eloquence. In that respect Woldemar is a very fine book; but as a novel I neither like the conduct nor the end of it.

The author, who, as a philosopher, refers all human destiny to sentiment, describes in his work, as it appears to me, sensibility differently from what it is in fact. An exaggerated delicacy, or rather a whimsical manner of considering the human heart, may interest in theory, but not when it is put in action, and thus attempted to be made something real.

Woldemar feels a warm friendship for a person who will not marry him, although she partakes of his feeling: he marries a

woman he does not love, because he thinks he has found in her a submissive and gentle character, which is proper for marriage. Scarcely has he married her, when he is on the point of giving himself up to the love he feels for the other. She, who would not be united to him, still loves him, but she revolts at the idea that it is possible for him to love her; and yet she desires to live near him, to take care of his children, to treat his wife as her sister, and only to know the affections of nature by the sympathy of friendship. It is thus that a piece of Goëthe, much boasted of, *Stella*, finishes with a resolution taken by two women, bound by sacred ties to the same man, to live with him in good understanding with each other. Such inventions only succeed in Germany, because in that country there is frequently more imagination than sensibility. Southern souls would understand nothing of this heroism of sentiment; passion is devoted, but jealous; and that pretended delicacy, which sacrifices love to friendship, without the injunctions of duty, is nothing but an affected coldness.

All this generosity at the expense of love is merely an artificial system. We must not

admit toleration, or rivality, into a sentiment which is then only sublime, when, like maternal and filial tenderness, it is exclusive and all-powerful. We ought not, by our own choice, to place ourselves in a situation where morals and sensibility are not of one accord; for what is involuntary is so beautiful, that it is alarming to be condemned to give orders to ourselves in all our actions, and to live as if we were our own victims.

It is, assuredly, neither from hypocrisy, nor from dryness of character, that a writer of real and excellent genius has imagined, in the novel of Woldemar, situations in which every personage sacrifices sentiment by means of sentiment, and anxiously seeks a reason for not loving what he loves. But Jácobi, who had felt from his youth a lively inclination towards every species of enthusiasm, has here sought out for a romantic mysteriousness in the attachments of the heart, which is very ingeniously described, but is quite foreign to nature.

It seems to me that Jacobi understands religion better than love, for he is too desirous of confounding them. It is not true that love, like religion, can find all its happiness in the renunciation of happiness

itself. We change the idea that we ought to entertain of virtue, when we make it consist in a sort of exalted feeling which has no object, and in sacrifices for which there is no necessity. All the characters in Jacobi's novel are continually tilting with their generosity against their love:—not only is this unlike what happens in life, but it has no moral beauty when virtue does not require it; for strong and passionate feelings honour human nature; and religion is so impressive as it is, precisely because it can triumph over such feelings. Would it have been necessary for God himself to condescend to address the human heart, if there were only found in that heart some cold and graceful affections which it would be so easy to renounce?

CHAPTER XVIII.

Of a romantic Bias in the Affections of the Heart.

The English philosophers have founded virtue, as we have said, upon feeling, or rather upon the moral sense; but this system has no connexion with the *sentimental* morality of which we are here talking: this morality (the name and idea of which hardly exist out of Germany) has nothing philosophical about it; it only makes a duty of sensibility, and leads to the contempt of those who are deficient in that quality.

Doubtless, the power of feeling love is very closely connected with morality and religion: it is possible then that our repugnance to cold and hard minds is a sublime sort of instinct—an instinct which apprizes us, that such beings, even when their conduct is estimable, act mechanically, or by calculation; and that it is impossible for any sympathy to exist between us and them. In Germany, where it is attempted to reduce all

impressions into precepts, every thing has been deemed immoral which was destitute of sensibility—nay, which was not of a romantic character. Werther had brought exalted sentiments so much into fashion, that hardly any body dared to show that he was dry and cold of nature, even when he was condemned to such a nature in reality. From thence arose that *forced sort of enthusiasm* for the moon, for forests, for the country, and for solitude; from thence those nervous fits, that affectation in the very voice, those looks which wished to be seen; in a word, all that apparatus of sensibility, which vigorous and sincere minds disdain.

The author of Werther was the first to laugh at these affectations; but, as ridiculous practices must be found in all countries, perhaps it is better that they should consist in the somewhat silly exaggeration of what is good, than in the elegant pretension to what is evil. As the desire of success is unconquerable among men, and still more so among women, the pretensions of mediocrity are a certain sign of the ruling taste at such an epoch, and in such a society; the same persons who displayed their *sentimentality* in Germany, would have

elsewhere exhibited a levity and superciliousness of character.

The extreme susceptibility of the German character is one of the great causes of the importance they attach to the least shades of sentiment; and this susceptibility frequently arises from the truth of the affections. It is easy to be firm when we have no sensibility; the sole quality which is then necessary is courage; for a well-regulated severity must begin with *self*:—but, when the proofs of interest in our welfare, which others give or refuse us, powerfully influence our happiness, we must have a thousand times more irritability in our hearts than those who use their friends as they would an estate, and endeavour solely to make them profitable. At the same time we ought to be on our guard against those codes of subtle and many-shaded sentiment, which the German writers have multiplied in such various manners, and with which their romances are filled. The Germans, it must be confessed, are not always perfectly natural. Certain of their own uprightness, of their own sincerity in all the real relations of life, they are tempted to regard the affected love of the beautiful as united to the worship of the good, and to

indulge themselves, occasionally, in exaggerations of this sort, which spoil every thing.

This rivalship of sensibility, between some German ladies and authors, would at the bottom be innocent enough, if the ridiculous appearance which it gives to affectation did not always throw a kind of discredit upon sincerity itself. Cold and selfish persons find a peculiar pleasure in laughing at passionate affections; and would wish to make every thing appear artificial which they do not experience. There are even persons of true sensibility whom this sugared sort of exaggeration cloys with their own impressions; and their feelings become exhausted, as we may exhaust their religion, by tedious sermons and superstitious practices.

It is wrong to apply the positive ideas which we have of good and evil to the subtilties of sensibility. To accuse this or that character of their deficiencies in this respect, is like making it a crime not to be a poet. The natural susceptibility of those who think more than they act, may render them unjust to persons of a different description. We must possess imagination to conjecture all that the heart can make us suffer; and the best sort of people in the world are often dull

and stupid in this respect: they march right across our feelings, as if they were treading upon flowers, and wondering that they fade away. Are there not men who have no admiration for Raphael, who hear music without emotion, to whom the ocean and the heavens are but monotonous appearances? How then should they comprehend the tempests of the soul?

Are not even those who are most endowed with sensibility sometimes discouraged in their hopes? May they not be overcome by a sort of inward coldness, as if the Godhead was retiring from their bosoms? They remain not less faithful to their affections; but there is no more incense in the temple, no more music in the sanctuary, no more emotion in the heart. Often also does misfortune bid us silence in ourselves this voice of sentiment, harmonious or distracting in its tone, as it agrees, or not, with our destiny. It is then impossible to make a duty of sensibility; for those who own it suffer so much from its possession, as frequently to have the right and the desire to subject it to restraint.

Nations of ardent character do not talk of sensibility without terror: a peaceable and dreaming people believe they can encourage

it without alarm. For the rest, it is possible, that this subject has never been written upon with perfect sincerity; for every one wishes to do himself honour by what he feels, or by what he inspires. Women endeavour to set themselves out like a romance; men like a history; but the human heart is still far from being penetrated in its most intimate relations. At one time or another, perhaps, somebody will tell us sincerely all he has felt; and we shall be quite astonished at discovering, that the greater part of maxims and observations are erroneous, and that there is an unknown soul at the bottom of that which we have been describing.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of Love in Marriage.

It is in marriage that sensibility is a duty: in every other relation virtue may suffice; but in that in which destinies are intertwined, where the same impulse, so to speak, serves for the beatings of two hearts, it seems that a profound affection is almost a necessary tie. The levity of manners has introduced so much misery into married life, that the moralists of the last age were accustomed to refer all the enjoyments of the heart to paternal and maternal love; and ended by almost considering marriage only in the light of a requisite condition for enjoying the happiness of having children. This is false in morals, and still more false with regard to happiness.

It is so easy to be good for the sake of our children, that we ought not to make a great merit of it. In their first years they can have no will but that of their parents; and when they have arrived at youth, they

exist by themselves. Justice and goodness compose the principal duties of a relation which nature makes easy. It is not thus in our connexions with that half of ourselves, who may find happiness or unhappiness in the least of our actions, of our looks, and of our thoughts. It is there alone that morality can exert itself in its complete energy; it is there also that is placed the true source of felicity.

A friend of the same age, in whose presence you are to live and die; a friend whose every interest is your own; all whose prospects are partaken by yourself, including that of the grave: here is a feeling which constitutes all our fate. Sometimes, it is true, our children, and more often our parents, become our companions through life; but this rare and sublime enjoyment is combated by the laws of nature; while the marriage-union is in accord with the whole of human existence.

Whence comes it, then, that this so holy union is so often profaned? I will venture to say it—the cause is, that remarkable inequality which the opinion of society establishes between the duties of the two parties. Christianity has drawn women out of a state that

resembled slavery. Equality, in the sight of God, being the basis of this wondeful religion, it has a tendency towards maintaining the equality of rights upon earth:—divine justice, the only perfect justice, admits no kind of privilege, and, above all, refuses that of force. Nevertheless, there have been left, by the slavery of women, some prejudices, which, combining with the great liberty that society allows them, have occasioned many evils.

It is right to exclude women from political and civil affairs; nothing is more opposite to their natural destination than all that would bring them into rivalry with men; and glory itself would be for woman only a splendid mourning-suit for happiness. But, if the destiny of women ought to consist in a continual act of devotion to conjugal love, the recompense of this devotion is the strict faithfulness of him who is its object.

Religion makes no distinction between the duties of the two parties; but the world establishes a wide difference; and out of this difference grows intrigue in women, and resentment in men.

"What heart can give itself entirely up,
"Nor wish another heart alike entire?"

Who then, in good faith, accepts friendship as the price of love? Who, sincerely, promises constancy to voluntary infidelity? Religion, without doubt, can demand it; for she alone knows the secret of that mysterious land where sacrifices are enjoyments:—but how unjust is the exchange to which man endeavours to make his companion submit!

"I will love you," he says, "passion-
"ately, for two or three years; and then,
"at the end of that time, I will talk reason
"to you." And this, which they call reason, is the disenchantment of life. "I will show,
"in my own house, coldness and weari-
"someness of spirit; I will try to please else-
"where: but you, who are ordinarily pos-
"sessed of more imagination and sensibility
"than I am; you, who have nothing to em-
"ploy, nor to distract you, while the world
"offers me every sort of avocation; you,
"who only exist for me, while I have a
"thousand other thoughts; you will be sa-
"tisfied with that subordinate, icy, divided
"affection, which it is convenient to me to
"grant you; and you will reject with dis-
"dain all the homage which expresses more
"exalted and more tender sentiments."

How unjust a treaty! all human feeling

revolts from it. There is a singular contrast between the forms of respect towards women, which the spirit of chivalry introduced in Europe, and the tyrannical sort of liberty which men have allotted to themselves. This contrast produces all the misfortunes of sentiment, unlawful attachments, perfidy, abandonment, and despair. The German nations have been less afflicted than others with these fatal events; but they ought, upon this point, to fear the influence which is sure to be exerted at length by modern civilization. It would be better to shut up women like slaves, neither to rouse their understanding nor their imagination, than to launch them into the middle of the world, and to develope all their faculties, in order to refuse them at last the happiness which those faculties render necessary to them.

There is an excess of wretchedness in an unhappy marriage which transcends every other misery in the world. The whole soul of a wife reposes upon the attachment of her husband:—to struggle alone against fortune; to advance towards the grave without the friend who should regret us; this is an isolated state, of which the Arabian desert gives but a faint idea:—and, when all the

treasure of your youthful years has been resigned in vain; when you hope no longer, at the end of life, the reflection of those early rays; when the twilight has nothing more that can recall the dawn, but is pale and discoloured as the phantom that foreruns the night:—then your heart revolts; and if you still love the being who treats you as a slave, since he does not belong to you, and yet disposes of you, despair seizes all your faculties, and Conscience herself grows troubled at the intensity of your distress.

Women might address those husbands who treat their fate with levity in these lines of the fable:—

"Yes! for you it is but play—
"But it steals our lives away."

And until some revolution of ideas shall take place, which changes the opinion of men as to the constancy which the marriage-tie imposes upon them, there will be always war between the two sexes; secret, eternal, cunning, perfidious war; and the morals of both will equally suffer by it.

In Germany there is hardly any inequality in marriage between the two sexes; but it is because the women, as often as the men, break the most holy bonds. The facility of

divorce introduces in family connexions a sort of anarchy which suffers nothing to remain in its proper truth or strength. It would be much better, in order to maintain something sacred upon earth, that there were one slave in marriage, rather than two free-thinkers.

Purity of mind and conduct is the first glory of a woman. What a degraded being would she be, deprived of both these qualities! But general happiness, and the dignity of the human species, would perhaps not gain less by the fidelity of man in marriage. In a word, what is there more beautiful in moral order than a young man who respects this sacred tie? Opinion does not require it of him; society leaves him free: a sort of savage pleasantry would endeavour to ridicule even the complaints of the heart which he had broken; for censure is easily turned upon the sufferer. He then is the master, but he imposes duties on himself; no disagreeable result can arise to himself from his faults; but he dreads the evil he may do to her who has intrusted herself to his heart; and generosity attaches him so much the more, because society dissolves his attachment.

Fidelity is enjoined to women by a thou-

sand different considerations. They may dread the dangers and the disgraces which are the inevitable consequences of one error. The voice of Conscience alone is audible by man; he knows he causes suffering to another; he knows that he is destroying, by his inconstancy, a sentiment which ought to last till death, and to be renewed in heaven:—alone with himself, alone in the midst of seductions of every kind, he remains pure as an angel; for if angels have not been represented under the characters of women, it is because the union of strength and purity is more beautiful, and also more celestial, than even the most perfect modesty itself in a feeble being.

Imagination, when it has not memory for a bridle, detracts from what we possess, embellishes what we fear we shall not obtain, and turns sentiment into a conquered difficulty. But, in the same manner as in the arts, difficulties vanquished do not require real genius; so in sentiment security is necessary, in order to experience those affections which are the pledges of eternity, because they alone give us an idea of that which cannot come to an end.

To the young man who remains faithful,

every day seems to increase the preference he feels towards her he loves; nature has bestowed on him unbounded freedom, and for a long time, at least, he never looks forward to evil days: his horse can carry him to the end of the world; war, when to that he devotes himself, frees him (at least at the moment) from domestic relations, and seems to reduce all the interest of existence to victory or death. The earth is his own, all its pleasures are offered to him; no fatigue intimidates him; no intimate association is necessary to him; he clasps the hand of a companion in arms, and the only tie he thinks necessary to him is formed. A time will, no doubt, arrive when Destiny will reveal to him her dreadful secrets; but, as yet, he suspects them not. Every time that a new generation comes into possession of its domain, does it not think that all the misfortunes of its predecessors arose from their weakness? Is it not persuaded that they were born weak and trembling, as they now are seen? Well! From the midst of so many illusions, how virtuous and sensible is he who devotes himself to a lasting attachment; the tie which binds this life to the other! Ah, how noble is a manly and dignified expression, when,

at the same time, it is modest and pure! There we behold a ray of that heavenly shame which beams from the crown of holy virgins, to light up even the warrior's brow.

If a young man chooses to share with one object the bright days of youth, he will, doubtless, amongst his contemporaries, meet with some who will pronounce the sentence of dupery upon him, the terror of the children of our times. But is he, who alone will be truly loved, a dupe? for the distresses, or the enjoyments of self-love, form the whole tissue of the frivolous and deceitful affections. Is he a dupe who does not amuse himself in deceiving others? to be, in his turn, still more deceived, more deeply ruined perhaps than his victim? In short, is he a dupe who has not sought for happiness in the wretched combinations of vanity, but in the eternal beauties of nature, which all proceed from constancy, from duration, and from depth?

No; God, in creating man the first, has made him the noblest of his creatures; and the most noble creature is that one which has the greater number of duties to perform. It is a singular abuse of the prerogative of a

superior nature to make it serve as an instrument to free itself from the most sacred ties, whereas true superiority consists in the power of the soul; and the power of the soul is virtue.

CHAPTER XX.

Modern Writers of the ancient School in Germany.

BEFORE the new school had given birth in Germany to two inclinations, which seem to exclude each other, metaphysics and poetry, scientific method and enthusiasm, there were some writers who deserved an honourable place by the side of the English moralists. Mendelsohn, Garve, Sulzer, Engel, &c. have written upon sentiments and duties with sensibility, religion, and candour. We do not, in their works, meet with that ingenious knowledge of the world, which characterizes the French authors, La Rochefoucault, La Bruyère, &c. German moralists paint society with a certain degree of ignorance which is interesting at first, but at last becomes monotonous.

Garve is the writer, of all others, who has attached the highest importance to speaking well of good company, fashion, politeness, &c. There is, throughout his manner

of expressing himself on this head, a great desire to appear a man of the world, to know the reason of every thing, to be knowing like a Frenchman, and to judge favourably of the court and of the town; but the common-place ideas which he displays in his writings on these different subjects prove, that he knows nothing but by hearsay, and has never taken those refined and delicate views which the relations of society afford.

When Garve speaks of virtue, he shows a pure understanding and a tranquil mind: he is particularly engaging, and original, in his treatise on Patience. Borne down by a cruel malady, he supported it with admirable fortitude; and whatever we have felt ourselves inspires new ideas.

Mendelsohn, a Jew by birth, devoted himself, from commerce, to the study of the fine arts, and of philosophy, without renouncing, in the smallest degree, either the belief or the rites of his religion; and being a sincere admirer of the Phædon, of which he was the translator, he retained the ideas and the sentiments which were the precursors of Jesus Christ; and, educated in the Psalms and in the Bible, his writings

preserve the character of Hebrew simplicity. He delighted in making morality perceptible, by parables in the eastern style; and that style is certainly the more pleasing, as it deprives precepts of the tone of reproach.

Among these fables, I shall translate one, which appears to me remarkable:—"Under "the tyrannical government of the Greeks, "the Israelites were once forbidden, under "pain of death, to read amongst themselves "the divine laws. Rabbi Akiba, notwith- "standing this prohibition, held assemblies, "where he gave lectures on this law. Pappus "heard of it, and said to him, 'Akiba, dost "thou not fear the threats of these cruel "men?'—'I will relate thee a fable,' re- "plied the Rabbi.—'A Fox was walking on "the bank of a river, and saw the Fishes col- "lecting together, in terror, at the bottom of "the river. "What causes your alarm?" "said the Fox.—"The children of men," re- "plied the Fishes, "are throwing their lines "into the river, to catch us, and we are "trying to escape from them."—"Do you "know what you ought to do?" said the "Fox. "Go there, upon the rock, where men "cannot reach you."—"Is it possible," cried "the Fishes, "that thou canst be the Fox,

"esteemed the most cunning amongst ani-
"mals? If thou seriously givest us this
"advice, thou showest thyself the most
"ignorant of them all. The water is to us
"the element of life; and is it possible for
"us to give it up because we are threatened
"by dangers?"—Pappus, the application of
"this fable is easy: religious doctrine is to
"us the source of all good; by that, and for
"that alone, we exist; if we are pursued
"into that refuge, we will not withdraw
"ourselves from danger, by seeking shelter
"in death.'"

The greater part of the world give no better advice than the fox; when they see persons of sensibility agitated by heart-aches, they always propose to them to quit the air where the storm is, to enter into the vacuum which destroys life.

Engel, like Mendelsohn, teaches morality in a dramatic manner: his fictions are trifling; but they bear an intimate relation to the mind. In one of them he represents an old man become mad by the ingratitude of his son; and the old man's smile, while his misfortune is being related, is painted with heart-rending truth. The man who is no longer conscious of his own existence, is as

frightful an object as a corpse walking without life. "It is a tree," says Engel, "the "branches of which are withered; its roots "are still fixed in the earth, but its top is "already seized upon by death." A young man, at the sight of this unfortunate creature, asks his father, if there is on earth a destiny more dreadful than that of this poor maniac?—All the sufferings which destroy, all those of which our reason is witness, seem to him nothing when compared with this deplorable self-ignorance. The father leaves his son to unfold all the horrors of the situation before him; and then suddenly asks him, if that of the wretch who has been the cause of it, is not a thousand times more dreadful? The gradation of the ideas is very well kept up in this recital, and the picture of the agonies of the mind is represented with eloquence that redoubles the terror caused by the most dreadful of all remorse.

I have in another place quoted a passage from the Messiah, in which the poet supposes that, in a distant planet, where the inhabitants are immortal, an angel arrived with intelligence, that there existed a world where human beings were subject to death.

Klopstock draws an admirable picture of the astonishment of those beings who knew not the grief of losing those they loved. Engel ingeniously displays an idea not less striking.

A man has seen all he held most dear, his wife and his daughter, perish. A sentiment of bitterness and of revolt against Providence takes possession of him: an old friend endeavours to re-open his heart to that deep but resigned grief, which pours itself out on the bosom of God; he shows him that death is the source of all the moral enjoyments of man.

Would there be affection between parent and child if man's existence was not at once lasting and transitory; fixed by sentiment, hurried away by time? If there was no longer any decline in the world, there would be no longer any progress: how then should we experience fear and hope? In short, in every action, in every sentiment, in every thought, death has its share. And not only in reality, but in imagination also, the joys and sorrows, which arise from the instability of life, are inseparable. Existence consists entirely in those sentiments of confidence, and of anxiety, with which the soul is filled, wandering between heaven and earth, and

death is the principal cause of our actions in life.

A woman, alarmed at the storms of the South, wished to remove to the frigid zone, where thunder is not heard, nor lightning seen:—our complaints against our lots are much of the same sort, says Engel. In fact, nature must be disenchanted, if all its dangers are to be removed. The charm of the world seems to belong to pain as much as to pleasure, to fear as much as to hope; and it may be said, that human destiny is ordered like a drama, in which terror and pity are necessary.

Undoubtedly, these thoughts are not sufficient to heal up the wounds of the heart: whatever we feel we consider as the overturning of nature, and no one ever suffered without thinking that a great disorder existed in the universe. But, when a long space of time has given room for reflection, repose is found in general considerations, and we unite ourselves to the laws of the universe by detaching ourselves from ourselves.

The German moralists of the ancient school are, for the most part, religious and feeling; their theory of virtue is disinterested; they do not admit that doctrine of utility, which

would lead us, as it does in China, to throw children into the river, if the population became too numerous. Their works are filled with philosophical ideas, and with melancholy and tender affections; but this was not enough to struggle against the selfish morality, armed with its sarcastic irony. This was not enough to refute sophisms, which were used against the truest and the best principles. The soft, and sometimes even timid, sensibility of the ancient German moralists was not sufficient to combat, with success, an adroit system of logic, and an elegant style of raillery, which, like all bad sentiments, bowed to nothing but force. More pointed weapons are necessary to oppose those arms which the world has forged: it is therefore with reason that the philosophers of the new school have thought that a more severe doctrine was requisite, a doctrine of more energy, and closer in its arguments, in order to triumph over the depravity of the age.

Assuredly, all that is simple is sufficient for all that is good; but when we are at a time in which it has been attempted to range wit on the side of immorality, it is necessary to attempt to gain over genius as the defender

of virtue. Doubtless it is a matter of much indifference whether we are accused of silliness, when we express what we feel; but this word *silliness* causes so much alarm among understandings of mediocrity, that we ought, if possible, to preserve them from its infection.

The Germans, fearing that we may turn their integrity to ridicule, sometimes attempt, although much against their natural disposition, to take a flight towards immorality, that they may acquire a brilliant and easy air. The new philosophers, by elevating their style and their ideas to a great height, have skilfully flattered the self-love of their adepts; and we ought to praise them for this innocent species of art; for the Germans have need of a sentiment of superiority over others to strengthen their minds. There is too much milk of human kindness in their character, as well as in their understanding. They are perhaps the only men to whom we could recommend pride, as the means of moral improvement. We cannot deny the fact, that the disciples of the new school have followed this advice to rather too great a length; but they are, nevertheless, the

most enlightened and the most courageous authors of their country.

What discovery have they made? it will be asked. No doubt, what was true in morals two thousand years ago, is true at the present moment; but, during this period, the arguments of meanness and corruption have been multiplied to such an excess, that a philosopher of good feeling ought to proportion his efforts to this fatal progress. Common ideas cannot struggle against a systematic immorality; we must dig deeper inwards, when the exterior veins of the precious metals are exhausted. We have so often seen, in our days, weakness united to a large proportion of virtue, that we have been accustomed to believe in the energy of immorality. The German philosophers (and let them receive the glory of the deed) have been the first in the eighteenth century, who have ranged free-thinking on the side of faith, genius on the side of morality, and character on the side of duty.

CHAPTER XXI.

Of Ignorance and Frivolity of Spirit in their Relations to Morals.

IGNORANCE, such as it appeared some ages past, respected knowledge, and was desirous of attaining it. The ignorance of our days is contemptuous, and endeavours to turn into ridicule the labours and the meditations of enlightened men. The philosophical spirit has spread over almost all classes a facility of reasoning, which is used to depreciate every thing that is great and serious in human nature, and we are at that epoch of civilization, in which all the beauties of the soul are mouldering into dust.

When the barbarians of the North seized upon the possession of the most fertile countries in Europe, they brought with them some fierce and manly virtues; and in their endeavours at self-improvement, they asked from the South, her sun, and her arts and sciences. But our civilized barbarians esteem nothing except address in the management of worldly affairs; and only instruct

themselves just enough to ridicule, by a few set phrases, the meditations of a whole life.

Those who deny the perfectibility of the human understanding, pretend that progression and decline follow each other by turns, and that the wheel of thought rolls round like that of fortune: What a sad spectacle is this! the generations of men employing themselves upon earth, like Sisyphus in hell, in constant and useless labour! and what would then be the destiny of the human race, when it resembled the most cruel punishment which the imagination of poetry has conceived? But it is not thus; and we can perceive a destiny always the same, always consequential, always progressive, in the history of man.

The contest between the interests of this world and more elevated sentiments has existed, at every period, in nations as well as in individuals. Superstition sometimes drives the enlightened into the opposite party of incredulity; and sometimes, on the contrary, knowledge itself awakens every belief of the heart. At the present æra, philosophers take refuge in religion, in order to discover the source of high conceptions, and of disinterested sentiments; at this æra,

prepared by ages, the alliance between philosophy and religion may be intimate and sincere. The ignorant are not, as formerly, the enemies of doubt, and determined to reject all the false lights which might disturb their religious hopes, and their chivalrous self-devotion; the ignorant of our days are incredulous, frivolous, superficial; they know all that selfishness has need to know; and their ignorance is only extended to those sublime studies, which excite in the soul a feeling of admiration for nature and for the Deity.

Warlike occupations formerly filled up the life of the nobility, and formed their minds for action; but since, in our days, men of the first rank have ceased to study any science profoundly, all the activity of their genius, which ought to have been employed in the circle of affairs, or in intellectual labours, is directed to the observation of manners, and to the knowledge of anecdotes.

Young persons, just come from school, hasten to put on idleness as soon as the manly robe: men and women act as spies upon each other in the minutest events, not exactly from maliciousness, but in order that they may have something to say, w'

they have nothing to employ their thoughts. This sort of daily censoriousness destroys good-nature and integrity. We are not satisfied with ourselves when we abuse the hospitality which we exercise or receive, by criticising those with whom we live; and we thus prevent the growth and the continuance of all sincere affection; for in listening to the ridicule of those who are dear to us, we tarnish all that is pure and exalted in that affection: sentiments, in which we do not maintain perfect sincerity, do more mischief than indifference.

Every one has his ridiculous side; it is only at a distance that a character appears perfect; but that which constitutes the individuality of each person being always some singularity, this singularity affords an opening to ridicule: man, therefore, who fears ridicule above every thing, endeavours, as much as possible, to remove the appearance of all that may signalize him in any manner, whether it be good or bad. This sort of effaced nature, in however good taste it may seem to be, has also enough of the ridiculous about it; but few have a sufficiently delicate *tact* to seize its absurdities.

Ridicule has this peculiarity; it is essen-

tially attached to goodness, but not to power. Power has something fierce and triumphant about it, which puts ridicule to death;—besides, the men of frivolous mind respect the *wisdom of the flesh*, according to the expression of a moralist of the sixteenth century; and we are astonished to discover all the depth of personal interest in those who appeared incapable of pursuing an idea, or a feeling, when nothing could result from either, advantageous to their calculations of fortune, or of vanity.

Frivolity of understanding does not lead men to neglect the affairs of this world. We find, on the contrary, a much more noble carelessness, in this respect, in serious characters than in men of a trivial nature; for their levity, in most cases, only consists in the contempt of general ideas, for the purpose of more close attention to their personal concerns.

There is sometimes a species of wickedness in men of wit; but genius is almost always full of goodness. Wickedness does not arise from a superfluity of understanding, but from a deficiency. If we could talk upon ideas, we should leave persons at rest if we believed that we could excel others by

our natural talents, we should not wish to level the walk that we are ambitious to command. There are common and moderate minds disguised under a poignant and malicious style of sarcasm; but true superiority is radiant with good feeling as well as with lofty thoughts.

The habit of intellectual employment inspires an enlightened benevolence towards men and things. We no longer cling to ourselves as privileged beings, when we know much of the destiny of man; we are not offended with every event, as if it were unexampled; and as justice only consists in the custom of considering the mutual relations of men under a general point of view, comprehensiveness of understanding serves to detach us from selfish calculations. We have ranged in thought over our own existence as well as that of others, when we have given ourselves up to the contemplation of the universe.

Another great disadvantage of ignorance, in the present times, is, that it renders us entirely incapable of having an opinion of our own upon the larger portion of subjects which require reflection: consequently, when this or that manner of thinking becomes

fashionable from the ascendancy of events, the greater part of mankind believe that these words, "all the world acts, or thinks, in this manner," ought to influence every claim of reason and of conscience.

In the idle class of society, it is almost impossible to have any soul without the cultivation of the mind. Formerly nature was sufficient to instruct man, and to expand his imagination; but, since thought (that fading shadow of feeling) has turned all things into abstractions, it is necessary to have a great deal of knowledge to have any good sentiment. Our choice is no longer balanced between the bursts of the soul, devoid of instruction, and philosophical studies; but between the importunate noise of common and frivolous society, and that language which has been holden by men of real genius from age to age, even to our own times.

How then can we, without the knowledge of languages, without the habit of reading, communicate with these men who are no more, and whom we feel so thoroughly our friends, our fellow-citizens, and our allies? We must be mean and narrow of soul to refuse such noble enjoyments. Those only,

who fill their lives with good actions, can dispense with study: the ignorance of idle men proves their dryness of soul, as well as their frivolity of understanding.

After all, there yet remains something truly beautiful and moral, which ignorance and emptiness cannot enjoy: this is the union of all thinking men, from one end of Europe to the other. Often they have no mutual relations; often they are dispersed to a great distance from each other; but when they meet, a word is enough for recognition. It is not this religion, or that opinion, or such a sort of study; it is the veneration of truth that forms their bond of union. Sometimes, like miners, they dig into the foundations of the earth, to penetrate the mysteries of the world of darkness, in the bosom of eternal night: sometimes they mount to the summit of Chimboraco, to discover, at the loftiest point of the globe, some hitherto unknown phænomena; sometimes they study the languages of the East, to find in them the primitive history of man: sometimes they journey to Jerusalem, to call forth from the holy ruins a spark, which reanimates religion and poetry: in a word, they truly are the people of God; they who do not yet

despair of the human race, and wish to preserve to man the dominion of reflection.

The Germans demand our especial gratitude in this respect. Ignorance and indifference, as to literature and the fine arts, is shameful with them; and their example proves, that, in our days, the cultivation of the understanding preserves, in the independent classes of society, some sentiments and some principles.

The direction of literature and philosophy was not good in France during the last part of the eighteenth century; but, if we may so express ourselves, the direction of ignorance is still more formidable: for no book does harm to him who reads every book. If idle men of the world, on the contrary, are busy for a few moments, the work they meet with is an event in their heads, like that of a stranger's arrival in the desert; and when this work contains dangerous sophistries, they have no arguments to oppose to it. The discovery of printing is truly fatal for those who only read by halves, or by hazard; for knowledge, like the spear of Achilles, ought to cure the wounds which it has inflicted.

Ignorance, in the midst of the refinements

of society, is the most hateful of all mixtures: it makes us, in some respects, like the vulgar, who value intrigue and cunning alone: it leads us to look but for good living and physical enjoyments; to make use of a little wit, in order to destroy a great deal of soul; to boast of our ignorance; to demand applause for what we do not feel; in a word, to unite a limited understanding with a hard heart, to such a degree, as to be deprived of that looking upwards to heaven, which Ovid has recorded as the noblest attribute of human nature.

Os homini sublime dedit; cœlumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.

He, who to man a form erect has given,
Bade his exalted looks be fix'd on heaven.

END OF THE THIRD PART.

PART THE FOURTH.

RELIGION AND ENTHUSIASM.

CHAPTER I.

General Considerations upon Religion in Germany.

THE nations of German extraction are all naturally religious; and the zealousness of this feeling has given occasion to many wars amongst them. Nevertheless, in Germany, above all other countries, the bias of mind leans more towards enthusiasm than fanaticism. The sectarian spirit must manifest itself under a variety of forms, in a country where the activity of thought is most observable; but, in general, they do not mix theological discussions with human passions; and the different opinions in regard to religion seldom wander out of that ideal world which enjoys a profound peace.

For a long time they were occupied, as I shall show in the following chapter, with

the inquiry into the doctrines of Christianity; but, for the last twenty years, since the writings of Kant have had great influence upon the public mind, there have prevailed a liberty and a comprehensiveness in the manner of considering religion, which neither require nor reject any form of worship in particular, but which derive from heavenly things the ruling principle of existence.

Many persons think that the religion of the Germans is too indefinite; and that it is better to rally round the standard of a more positive and severe mode of worship. Lessing says, in his Essay on the Education of the human Race, that religious revelations have been always proportioned to the degree of knowledge which existed at the time of their appearance. The Old Testament, the Gospel, and, in many respects, the Reformation, were, according to their seasons, perfectly in harmony with the progress of the understanding; and, perhaps, we are on the eve of a developement of Christianity, which will collect all the scattered rays in the same focus, and which will make us perceive in religion more than morality, more than happiness, more than philosophy, more than

sentiment itself, since every one of these gifts will be multiplied by its union with all the others.

However this may be, it is perhaps interesting to know under what point of view religion is considered in Germany, and how they have found means to connect it with the whole literary and philosophical system, of which I have sketched the outline. There is something imposing in this collective mass of thought, which lays the whole moral order completely open to our eyes; and gives this sublime edifice self-devotion for its base, and the Divinity for its capital.

It is to the feeling of the infinite that the greater portion of German writers refer all their religious ideas; but it may be asked, Can we conceive infinity? Do we not conceive it, at least in a negative manner, when, in the mathematics, we are unable to suppose any boundary to duration or to space? This infinity consists in the absence of limits; but the feeling of the infinite, such as the imagination and the heart experience it, is positive and creative.

The enthusiasm, which the beautiful in idea makes us feel (that emotion, so full of agitation and of purity at the same time), is

excited by the sentiment of infinity. We feel ourselves, as it were, disengaged by admiration from the shackles of human destiny; and it seems as if some wondrous secret was revealed to us, to free the soul for ever from languor and decline. When we contemplate the starry heaven, where the sparks of light are universes like our own, where the brilliant dust of the milky way traces, with its worlds, a circle in the firmament, our thoughts are lost in the infinite, our hearts beat for the unknown, for the immense, and we feel that it is only on the other side of earthly experience that our real life will commence. In a word, religious emotions, more than all others together, awaken in us the feeling of the infinite; but when they awaken they satisfy it; and it is for this reason, doubtless, that a man of great genius has said: "That a thinking being was not "happy, until the idea of infinity became "an enjoyment instead of a burthen to his "mind."

In effect, when we give ourselves entirely up to reflections, to images, to desires which extend beyond the limits of experience, it is then only that we freely breathe. When we wish to confine ourselves to the interests,

the conveniencies, the laws of this world, genius, sensibility, enthusiasm, painfully agitate the soul; but they overflow it with enjoyment when we consecrate them to this remembrance, to this expectation of infinity, which appears in metaphysics under the form of innate dispositions, in virtue under that of self-devotion, in the arts under that of the ideal, and in Religion herself under that of divine love.

The feeling of the infinite is the true attribute of the soul: all that is beautiful of every kind excites in us the hope, and the desire, of an eternal futurity, and of a sublime existence: we cannot hear the wind in the forest, nor the delicious concords of human voices; we cannot feel the enchantment of eloquence or of poetry; in a word, above all, we cannot innocently, deeply love, without being penetrated with religion and immortality. All the sacrifices of personal interest arise from our wish to bring ourselves into accord with this feeling of the infinite, of which we experience all the charm, without being able to express it. If the power of duty was confined to the short duration of this life, how then would it have more command than the passions over the soul? Who

would sacrifice what is bounded to what is bounded? "All limited things are so short," says St. Augustin; the moments of enjoyment that earthly inclinations may induce, and the days of peace that a moral conduct ensures, would differ very little, if emotions without limit, and without end, did not spontaneously spring up in the bottom of that human being's heart who devotes himself to virtue.

Many persons will deny this feeling of the infinite; and, assuredly, they have very good ground to deny it, for we cannot possibly explain it to them: a few additional words will not succeed in making them understand what the universe has failed to teach them. Nature has arrayed the infinite in symbols which may bring it down to us: light and darkness, storm and silence, pleasure and pain, all inspire man with this universal religion, of which his heart is the sanctuary.

A writer, of whom I have already had occasion to speak, M. Ancillon, has lately published a work upon the new German philosophy, which unites the perspicuity of French wit with the depth of German genius. M. Ancillon had before acquired a

celebrated name as an historian; he is, incontestably, what we are accustomed to call in France *a good head;* his understanding itself is positive and methodical; and it is by his soul that he has seized all that the thought of the infinite can present most comprehensive and most exalted. What he has written on this subject bears a character entirely original; it is, to use the expression, the sublime reduced to logic: he traces, with precision, the boundary where experimental knowledge is stopped, whether in the arts, or in philosophy, or in religion; he shows that sentiment goes much farther than knowledge; and that, beyond demonstrative proofs, there is a natural evidence in it; beyond analysis, an inspiration; beyond words, ideas; beyond ideas, emotions; and that the feeling of the infinite is a phænomenon of mind, a primitive phænomenon, without which there would be nothing in man but physical instinct and calculation.

It is difficult to be religious according to the manner introduced by some dry characters, or some well-meaning persons, who would wish to confer upon religion the honours of scientific demonstration. That which so intimately touches upon the mystery of

existence, cannot be expressed by the regular forms of speech. Reasoning on such subjects serves to show where reasoning comes to an end; and at that conclusion commences true certainty; for the truths of feeling have an intensity of strength which calls all our being to their support. The infinite acts upon the soul so as to exalt and to disengage it from time. The business of life is to sacrifice the interests of our transitory existence to that immortality which even now commences for us, if we are already worthy of it; and not only the greater part of religions have this same object, but the fine arts, poetry, glory, love, are religions, into which there enters more or less alloy.

This expression, "*it is divine*," which has become general, in order to extol the beauties of nature and of art—this expression is a species of belief among the Germans: it is not from indifference that they are tolerant; it is because there is an universality in their manner of feeling and conceiving religion. In fact, every man may find, in some different wonder of the universe, that which most powerfully addresses his soul:—one admires the Divinity in the character of a father; another in the innocence of a child;

a third in the heavenly aspect of Raphael's virgins, in music, in poetry, in nature, it matters not in what—for all are agreed in admiring (if all are animated by a religious principle) the genius of the world, and of every human being.

Men of superior genius have raised doubts concerning this or that doctrine; and it is a great misfortune, that the subtilty of logic, or the pretences of self-love, should be able to disturb and to chill the feeling of faith. Frequently also reflection has found itself at a loss in those intolerant religions, of which, as we may say, a penal code has been formed, and which have impressed upon theology all the forms of a despotic government: but how sublime is that worship, which gives us a foretaste of celestial happiness in the inspiration of genius, as in the most obscure of virtues; in the tenderest affections as in the severest pains; in the tempest as in the fairest skies; in the flower as in the oak; in every thing except calculation, except the deadly chill of selfishness, which separates us from the benevolence of nature, which makes vanity alone the motive of our actions—vanity, whose root is ever venomous! How beautiful is that religion which

consecrates the whole world to its Author, and makes all our faculties subservient to the celebration of the holy rites of this wonderful universe!

Far from such a belief interdicting literature or science, the theory of all ideas, the secret of all talents, belong to it; nature and the Divinity would necessarily be in contradiction to each other, if sincere piety forbade men to make use of their faculties, and to taste the pleasure that results from their exercise. There is religion in all the works of genius; there is genius in all religious thoughts. Wit is of a less illustrious origin; it serves for an instrument of contention; but genius is creative. The inexhaustible source of talents and of virtues, is this feeling of infinity, which claims its share in all generous actions, and in all profound thoughts.

Religion is nothing if it is not every thing; if existence is not filled with it; if we do not incessantly maintain in the soul this belief in the invisible; this self-devotion, this elevation of desire, which ought to triumph over the low inclinations to which our nature exposes us.

But how can religion be incessantly present to our thoughts, if we do not unite it

to every thing which ought to form the occupation of a noble existence, devoted affections, philosophical meditations, and the pleasures of the imagination? A great number of practices are recommended to the faithful, that their religion may be recalled to their minds every moment of the day by the obligations which it imposes; but if the whole life could be naturally, and without effort, an act of worship at every moment, would not this be still better? Since the admiration of the beautiful always has relation to the Divinity, and since the very spring of energetic thought makes us remount to our origin, why should not the power of feeling love, poetry, philosophy, form the columns of the Temple of Faith?

CHAPTER II.

Of Protestantism.

It was natural for a revolution, prepared by ideas, to take place in Germany; for the prominent trait of this thinking people is the energy of internal conviction. When once an opinion has taken possession of German heads, their patience, and their perseverance in supporting it, do singular honour to the force of human volition.

When we read the details of the death of John Huss, and of Jerome of Prague, the forerunners of the Reformation, we see a striking example of that which characterized the Protestant leaders in Germany, the union of a lively faith with the spirit of inquiry. Their reason did no injury to their belief, nor their belief any to their reason; and their moral faculties were always put into simultaneous action.

Throughout Germany we find traces of the different religious struggles, which, for many ages, occupied the whole nation. They

still show, in the cathedral at Prague, bas-reliefs where the devastations committed by the Hussites are represented; and that part of the church which the Swedes set fire to in the thirty years' war, is not yet rebuilt. Not far from thence, on the bridge, is placed the statue of St. John Nepomucenes, who preferred perishing in the waves to revealing the weaknesses which an unfortunate queen had confessed to him. The monuments, and even the ruins, which testify the influence of religion over man, interest the soul in a lively manner; for the wars of opinion, however cruel they may be, do more honour to nations than the wars of interest.

Of all the great men produced by Germany, Luther is the one whose character is the most German: his firmness had something rude about it; his conviction arose even to infatuation; the courage of the mind was in him the principle of the courage of action; what there was passionate in his soul did not divert him from abstract studies; and although he attacked certain abuses, and considered certain doctrines as prejudices, it was not a philosophical incredulity, but a species of fanaticism, that excited him.

Nevertheless, the Reformation has intro-

duced into the world inquiry in matters of religion. In some minds its result has been scepticism; in others, a stronger conviction of religious truths: the human mind had arrived at an epoch when it was necessary for it to examine in order to believe. The discovery of printing, the multiplicity of every sort of knowledge, and the philosophical investigation of truth, did not allow any longer that blind faith which was formerly so profitable to its teachers. Religious enthusiasm could not grow again except by inquiry and meditation. It was Luther who put the Old Testament and the Gospel into the hands of all the world; it was he who gave its impulse to the study of antiquity; for in learning Hebrew to read the Old, and Greek to read the New Testament, the students cultivated the ancient languages, and their minds were turned towards historical researches.

Examination may weaken that habitual faith which men do well to preserve as much as they can; but when man comes out of his inquiries more religious than he was when he entered into them, it is then that Religion is built upon an immutable basis; it is then that harmony exists between her and Know-

ledge, and that they mutually assist each other.

Some writers have largely declaimed against the system of perfectibility; and, to hear them, we should think that it was a real crime to believe our species capable of perfection. It is enough in France that an individual of such a party should have maintained this or that opinion, to make it bad taste to accept it; and all the sheep of the same flock, one after the other, hasten to level their wise attacks at ideas, which still remain exactly what they are by nature.

It is very probable that the human species is susceptible of education, as well as each man in particular; and that there are epochs marked for the progress of thought in the eternal career of time. The Reformation was the æra of inquiry, and of that enlightened conviction which inquiry produces. Christianity was first established, then altered, then examined, then understood; and these different periods were necessary to its developement; they have sometimes lasted a hundred, sometimes a thousand years. The Supreme Being, who draws time out of eternity, does not economize that time after our manner.

When Luther appeared, religion was no more than a political power, attacked or defended as an interest of this world. Luther recalled it to the land of thought. The historical progress of the human mind, in this respect, in Germany, is worthy of remark. When the wars occasioned by the Reformation were set at rest, and the Protestant refugees were naturalized in the different northern states of the German empire, the philosophical studies, which had always made the interior of the soul their object, were naturally directed towards religion; and there is no literature of the eighteenth century in which we find so many religious books as in the literature of Germany.

Lessing, one of the most powerful geniuses of his nation, never ceased to attack, with all the strength of his logic, that maxim so commonly repeated, "*that there "are some dangerous truths.*" In fact, it is a singular instance of presumption, in certain individuals, to think they have the right of concealing the truth from their fellow-men, and to arrogate the prerogative of placing themselves (like Alexander before Diogenes) in a situation to veil from our eyes that sun which belongs alike to all: this pretended

prudence is but the theory of imposture; is but an attempt to play the juggler with ideas, in order to secure the subjection of mankind. Truth is the work of God; lies are the works of man. If we study those æras of history in which truth has been an object of fear, we shall always find them when partial interests contended in some manner against the universal tendency.

The search for truth is the noblest of employments, and its promulgation is a duty. There is nothing to fear for society, or for religion, in this search, if it is sincere; and if it is not sincere, truth no longer, but falsehood, causes the evil. There is not a sentiment in man of which we cannot find the philosophical reason; not an opinion, not even a prejudice, generally diffused, which has not its root in nature. We ought then to examine, not with the object of destroying, but to build our belief upon internal, not upon borrowed conviction.

We see errors lasting for a long time; but they always cause a painful uneasiness. When we look at the tower of Pisa, which leans over its base, we imagine that it is about to fall, although it has stood for ages; and our imagination is not at its ease, except

in the sight of firm and regular edifices. It is the same with our belief in certain principles; that which is founded upon prejudices makes us uneasy; and we love to see reason supporting, with all its power, the elevated conceptions of the soul.

The understanding contains in itself the principle of every thing which it acquires by experience. Fontenelle has justly said, that "we think we recognise a truth when first "we hear it." How then can we imagine, that sooner or later just ideas, and the internal conviction which they cause, will not reappear? There is a pre-established harmony between truth and human reason, which always ends by bringing each nearer to the other.

Proposing to men not to interchange their thoughts, is what is commonly called keeping the secret of the play. We only continue in ignorance because we are unconsciously ignorant; but from the moment that we have commanded silence, it appears that somebody has spoken; and to stifle the thoughts which those words have excited, we must degrade Reason herself. There are men, full of energy and good faith, who never dreamt of this or that philosophical

truth; but those who know and conceal their knowledge, are hypocrites, or, at least, are most arrogant and most irreligious beings. Most arrogant; for what right have they to think themselves of the class of the initiated, and the rest of the world excluded from it?—Most irreligious; for if there is a philosophical or natural truth, a truth, in short, which contradicts religion, religion would not be what it is, the light of lights.

We must be very ignorant of Christianity, that is to say, of the revelation of the moral laws of man and the universe, to recommend to those who wish to believe in it, ignorance, secrecy, and darkness. Open the gates of the temple; call to your support genius, the fine arts, the sciences, philosophy; assemble them in one focus to honour and to comprehend the Author of creation; and if Love has said, that the name of those we love seems written on the leaves of every flower, how should not the impress of the Godhead appear in every thought that attaches itself to the eternal chain?

The right of examining what we ought to believe, is the foundation of Protestantism. The first reformers did not so understand it: they thought they could fix the pillars of

Hercules of the human mind at the boundary of their own knowledge; but they were wrong in fancying that men would submit to their decisions as if they were infallible;—they who rejected all authority of this sort in the Catholic religion. Protestantism then was sure to follow the developement and the progress of knowledge; while Catholicism boasted of being immoveable in the midst of the waves of time.

Among the German writers of the Protestant religion, different ways of thinking have prevailed, which have successively occupied attention. Many learned men have made inquiries, unheard of before, into the Old and New Testament. Michaëlis has studied the languages, the antiquities, and the natural history of Asia, to interpret the Bible; and while the spirit of French philosophy was making a jest of the Christian religion, they made it in Germany the object of erudition. However this sort of labour may, in some respects, insure religious minds, what veneration does it not imply for the book which is the object of so serious an inquiry! These learned men attacked neither doctrines, nor prophecies, nor miracles; but a great number of writers

have followed them, who have attempted to give an entirely physical explanation to the Old and New Testament; and who, considering them both in the light only of good writings of an instructive kind, see nothing in the mysteries but oriental metaphors.

These theologians called themselves *rational interpreters*, because they believed they could disperse every sort of obscurity: but it was a wrong direction of the spirit of inquiry to attempt applying it to truths, of which we can have no presentiment, except by elevation and meditation of soul. The spirit of inquiry ought to serve for the demarcation of what is superior to reason, in the same manner that an astronomer defines the heights to which the sight of man cannot attain: thus therefore to point out the incomprehensible regions, without pretending to deny their existence, or to describe them by words, is to make use of the spirit of inquiry, according to its measure, and its destination.

The learned mode of interpretation is not more satisfactory than dogmatic authority. The imagination and the sensibility of the Germans could not content itself with this sort of prosaic religion, which paid the

respect of reason to Christianity. Herder was the first to regenerate faith by poetry: deeply instructed in the eastern languages, he felt a kind of admiration for the Bible like that which a sanctified Homer would inspire. The natural bias of the mind in Germany is to consider poetry as a sort of prophetic gift, the forerunner of divine enjoyments; so that it was not profanation to unite to religious faith the enthusiasm which poetry inspires.

Herder was not scrupulously orthodox; but he rejected, as well as his partisans, the learned commentaries which had the simplification of the Bible for their object, and which, by simplifying, annihilated it. A sort of poetical theology, vague but animated, free but feeling, takes the place of that pedantic school which thought it was advancing towards reason, when it retrenched some of the miracles of this universe; though, at the same time, the marvellous is, in some respects, perhaps, still more easy to conceive, than that which it has been agreed to call the natural.

Schleiermacher, the translator of Plato, has written discourses of extraordinary eloquence upon religion; he combatted that indiffer-

ence which has been called *toleration*, and that destructive labour which has passed for impartial inquiry. Schleiermacher is not the more on this account an orthodox theologian; but he shows, in the religious doctrines which he adopts, the power of belief, and a great vigour of metaphysical conception. He has developed, with much warmth and clearness, the feeling of the infinite, of which I have spoken in the preceding chapter. We may call the religious opinions of Schleiermacher, and of his disciples, a philosophical theology.

At length Lavater, and many men of talent, attached themselves to the mystical opinions, such as Fenelon in France, and different writers in all countries, conceived them. Lavater preceded some of the authors whom I have cited; but it is only for these few years past, that the doctrine, of which he may be considered one of the principal supporters, has gained any great popularity among the Germans. The work of Lavater upon physiognomy is more celebrated than his religious writings; but that which rendered him especially remarkable was his personal character. There was in this man a

rare mixture of penetration and of enthusiasm; he observed mankind with a peculiar sagacity of understanding, and yet abandoned himself, with entire confidence, to a set of ideas which might be called superstitious. He had sufficient self-love; and this self-love, perhaps, was the cause of those whimsical opinions about himself, and his miraculous calling. Nevertheless, nothing could equal the religious simplicity and the candour of his soul. We could not see without astonishment, in a drawing-room of our own times, a minister of the holy Gospel inspired like an apostle, and animated as a man of the world. The warrant of Lavater's sincerity was to be found in his good actions, and in his fine countenance, which bore the stamp of inimitable truth.

The religious writers of Germany, properly so called, are divided into two very distinct classes—the defenders of the Reformation, and the partisans of Catholicism. I shall examine separately the writers who are of these different opinions; but the assertion which it is important to make before every thing is this, that if northern Germany is the country where theological questions have been most agitated, it is also that

in which religious sentiments are most universal; the national character is impressed with them, and it is from them that the genius of the arts and of literature draws all its inspiration. In short, among the lower orders, religion in the north of Germany bears an ideal and sweet character, which singularly surprises us in a country where we have been accustomed to think the manners very rude.

Once, as I was travelling from Dresden to Leipsic, I stopped for the evening at Meissen, a little village placed upon an eminence over the river, and the church of which contains tombs consecrated to illustrious recollections. I walked upon the Esplanade, and suffered myself to sink into that sort of reverie which the setting sun, the distant view of the landscape, and the sound of the stream that flows at the bottom of the valley, so easily excite in our souls:—I then caught the voices of some common persons, and I was afraid of hearing such vulgar words as are elsewhere sung in the streets. What was my astonishment, when I understood the burthen of their song!—"They loved each other, and "they died, hoping one day to meet again!"

Happy that country where such feelings are popular; and spread abroad, even into the air we breathe, I know not what religious fellowship, of which love for heaven, and pity for man, form the touching union!

CHAPTER III.

Moravian Mode of Worship.

THERE is perhaps too much freedom in Protestantism to satisfy a certain religious austerity, which may seize upon the man who is overwhelmed by great misfortunes; sometimes even in the habitual course of life, the reality of this world disappears all at once, and we feel ourselves in the middle of its interests as we should at a ball, where we did not hear the music; the dancing that we saw there would appear insane. A species of dreaming apathy equally seizes upon the bramin and the savage, when one by the force of thought, and the other by the force of ignorance, passes entire hours in the dumb contemplation of destiny. The only activity of which the human being is then susceptible, is that which has divine worship for its object. He loves to do something for Heaven every moment; and it is this disposition which gives their attraction to convents, how-

ever great may be their inconvenience in other respects.

The Moravians are the monks of Protestantism; and the religious enthusiasm of northern Germany gave them birth, about a hundred years ago. But although this association is as severe as a Catholic convent, it is more liberal in its principles. No vows are taken there; all is voluntary; men and women are not separated, and marriage is not forbidden. Nevertheless the whole society is ecclesiastical; that is to say, every thing is done there by religion and for it; the authority of the church rules this community of the faithful, but this church is without priests, and the sacred office is fulfilled there in turn, by the most religious and venerable persons.

Men and women, before marriage, live separately from each other in assemblies, where the most perfect equality reigns. The entire day is filled with labour; the same for every rank; the idea of Providence, constantly present, directs all the actions of the life of the Moravians.

When a young man chooses to take a companion, he addresses himself to the female superintendants of girls or widows,

and demands of them the person he wishes to espouse. They draw lots in the church, to know whether he ought to marry the woman whom he prefers; and if the lot is against him, he gives up his demand. The Moravians have such a habit of resignation, that they do not resist this decision; and as they only see the women at church, it costs them less to renounce their choice. This manner of deciding upon marriage, and upon many other circumstances of life, indicates the general spirit of the Moravian worship. Instead of keeping themselves submitted to the will of Heaven, they fancy they can learn it by inspirations, or, what is still more strange, by interrogating Chance. Duty and events manifest to man the views of God concerning the earth; how can we flatter ourselves with the notion of penetrating them by other means?

We observe, in other respects, among the generality of Moravians, evangelical manners, such as they must have existed from the time of the Apostles, in Christian communities. Neither extraordinary doctrines nor scrupulous practices constitute the bond of this association: the Gospel is there interpreted in the most natural and clear

manners, but they are there faithful to the consequences of this doctrine, and they make their conduct, under all relations, harmonize with their religious principles. The Moravian communities serve, above all, to prove that Protestantism, in its simplicity, may lead to the most austere sort of life, and the most enthusiastic religion; death and immortality, well understood, are sufficient to occupy and to direct the whole of existence.

I was some time ago at Dintendorf, a little village near Erfurth, where a Moravian community is established. This village is three leagues distant from every great road; it is situated between two mountains, upon the banks of a rivulet; willows and lofty poplars environ it: there is something tranquil and sweet in the look of the country, which prepares the soul to free itself from the turbulence of life. The buildings and the streets are marked by perfect cleanliness; the women, all clothed alike, hide their hair, and bind their head with a riband, whose colour indicates whether they are married, maidens, or widows: the men are clothed in brown, almost like the Quakers. Mercantile industry employs nearly all of them;

but one does not hear the least noise in the village. Every body works in regularity and silence; and the internal action of religious feeling lulls to rest every other impulse.

The girls and widows live together in a large dormitory, and, during the night, one of them has her turn to watch, for the purpose of praying, or of taking care of those who may be ill. The unmarried men live in the same manner. Thus there exists a great family for him who has none of his own; and the name of brother and sister is common to all Christians.

Instead of bells, wind instruments, of a very sweet harmony, summon them to divine service. As we proceeded to church, by the sound of this imposing music, we felt ourselves carried away from the earth; we fancied that we heard the trumpets of the last judgment, not such as remorse makes us fear them, but such as a pious confidence makes us hope them; it seemed as if the divine compassion manifested itself in this appeal, and pronounced beforehand the pardon of regeneration.

The church was dressed out in white roses, and blossoms of white thorn: pictures were

not banished from the temple; and music was cultivated as a constituent part of religion: they only sang psalms; there was neither sermon, nor mass, nor argument, nor theological discussion; it was the worship of God in spirit and in truth. The women, all in white, were ranged by each other without any distinction whatever; they looked like the innocent shadows who were about to appear together before the tribunal of the Divinity.

The burying-ground of the Moravians is a garden, the walks of which are marked out by funeral stones; and by the side of each is planted a flowering shrub. All these grave-stones are equal; not one of these shrubs rises above the other; and the same epitaph serves for all the dead. "He was "born on such a day; and on such another "he returned into his native country." Excellent expression to designate the end of our life! The ancients said, "He lived;" and thus threw a veil over the tomb, to divest themselves of its idea; the Christians place over it the star of hope.

On Easter-day, divine service is performed in the burying-ground, which is close to the church, and the resurrection is announced

in the middle of the tombs. All those who are present at this act of worship, know the stone that is to be placed over their coffin; and already breathe the perfume of the young tree, whose leaves and flowers will penetrate into their tombs. It is thus that we have seen, in modern times, an entire army assisting at its own funeral rites, pronouncing for itself the service of the dead, decided in belief that it was to conquer immortality *.

The communion of the Moravians cannot adapt itself to the social state, such as circumstances ordain it to be; but as it has been long and frequently asserted that Catholicism alone addressed the imagination, it is of consequence to remark, that what truly touches the soul in religion is common to all Christian churches. A sepulchre and a prayer exhaust all the power of the pathetic; and the more simple the faith, the more emotion is caused by the worship.

* The allusion in this passage is to the siege of Saragossa.

CHAPTER IV.

Of Catholicism.

THE Catholic religion is more tolerant in Germany than in any other country. The peace of Westphalia having fixed the rights of the different religions, they no longer feared their mutual invasions; and, besides, this mixture of modes of worship, in a great number of towns, has necessarily induced the occasion of observing and judging each other. In religious as well as in political opinions, we make a phantom of our adversaries, which is almost always dissipated by their presence; sympathy presents a fellow-creature in him whom we believed an enemy.

Protestantism being much more favourable to knowledge than Catholicism, the Catholics in Germany have put themselves in a sort of defensive position, which is very injurious to the progress of information. In the countries where the Catholic religion reigned alone, such as France and Italy, they have known how to unite it to litera-

ture and to the fine arts; but in Germany, where the Protestants have taken possession, by means of the universities, and by their natural tendency to every thing which belongs to literary and philosophical study, the Catholics have fancied themselves obliged to oppose to them a certain sort of reserve, which destroys almost all the means of distinction, in the career of imagination and of reflection. Music is the only one of the fine arts which is carried to a greater degree of perfection in the south of Germany than in the north; unless we reckon in the number of the fine arts a certain convenient mode of life, the enjoyments of which agree well enough with repose of mind.

Among the Catholics in Germany there is a sincere, tranquil, and charitable piety; but there are no famous preachers, nor religious authors who are quoted: nothing there excites the emotions of the soul; they consider religion as a matter of fact, in which enthusiasm has no share; and one might say, that in a mode of religious worship so well consolidated, the future life itself became a positive truth, upon which we no longer exercise our thoughts.

The revolution which has taken place

among the philosophical minds in Germany, during the last thirty years, has brought them almost all back to religious sentiments. They had wandered a little from them; when the impulse necessary to propagate toleration had exceeded its proper bounds: but, by recalling idealism in metaphysics, inspiration in poetry, contemplation in the sciences, they have restored the empire of religion; and the reform of the Reformation, or rather the philosophical direction of liberty which it has occasioned, has banished for ever (at least in theory) materialism, and all its fatal consequences. In the midst of this intellectual revolution, so fruitful in noble results, some writers have gone too far; as it always happens in the oscillations of thought.

We might say, that the human mind is continually hurrying from one extreme to another; as if the opinions which it has just deserted, were changed into regrets to pursue it. The Reformation, according to some authors of the new school, has been the cause of many religious wars; it has separated the north from the south of Germany; it has given the Germans the fatal habit of fighting with each other; and these divisions

have robbed them of the right of being denominated one nation. Lastly, the Reformation, by giving birth to the spirit of inquiry, has dried up the imagination, and introduced scepticism in the place of faith: it is necessary then, say the same advocates, to return to the unity of the church, by returning to Catholicism.

In the first place, if Charles the Fifth had adopted Lutheranism, there would have been the same unity in Germany; and the whole country, like the northern portion of it, would have formed an asylum for the arts and sciences. Perhaps this harmony would have given birth to free institutions, combined with a real strength; and perhaps that sad separation of character and knowledge would have been avoided, which has yielded up the north to reverie, and kept the south in ignorance. But without losing ourselves in conjectures as to what would have happened, a sort of calculation always very uncertain, we cannot deny that the æra of the Reformation was that in which learning and philosophy were introduced into Germany. This country is not perhaps raised to the first rank in war, in the arts, in political liberty: it is knowledge of

which Germany has a right to be proud, and its influence upon the thinking part of Europe takes its date from Protestantism. Such revolutions neither proceed nor are brought to an end by arguments; they belong to the historical progress of the human mind; and the men who appear to be their authors, are never more than their consequences.

Catholicism, disarmed in the present day, has the majesty of an old lion, which once made the world tremble;—but when the abuses of its power brought on the Reformation, it put fetters on the human mind; and far from want of feeling being then the cause of the opposition to its ascendancy, it was in order to make use of all the faculties of the understanding and of the imagination that the freedom of thought was so loudly demanded again. If circumstances, of entirely divine origin, and in which the hand of man was not in the least operative, were hereafter to bring about a reunion between the two churches, we should pray to God, it appears to me, with new emotion, by the side of those venerable priests, who, in the latter years of the last century, have suffered so much for conscience sake. But,

assuredly, it is not the change of religion in a few individuals, nor, above all, the unjust discredit which their writings have a tendency to throw upon the reformed religion, that can lead to the unity of religious opinions.

There are in the human mind two very distinct impulses; one makes us feel the want of faith, the other that of examination. One of these tendencies ought not to be satisfied at the expense of the other: Protestantism and Catholicism do not arise from the different character of the Popes, and of a Luther: it is a poor mode of examining history to attribute it to accidents. Protestantism and Catholicism exist in the human heart;—they are moral powers which are developed in nations, because they are inherent in every individual. If in religion, as in other human affections, we can unite what the imagination and the reason suggest, there is harmony in the whole man; but in man, as in the universe, the power of creating and that of destroying, faith and inquiry, succeed and combat each other.

It has been attempted, in order to harmonize these two inclinations, to penetrate deeper into the soul; and from that attempt

have arisen the mystical opinions of which we shall speak in the following chapter; but the small number of persons who have abjured Protestantism have done nothing but revive resentments. Ancient denominations reanimate ancient quarrels; magic makes use of certain words to call up apparitions; we may say, that upon all subjects there are terms which exert this power; these are the watch-words which serve for a rallying point to party spirit; we cannot pronounce them without agitating afresh the torches of discord. The German Catholics have, to the present moment, shown themselves very ignorant of what was passing upon these points in the North. The literary opinions seemed to be the cause of the small number of persons who changed their religion; and the ancient church has hardly regained any proselytes.

Count Frederic Stolberg, a man of great respectability, both from his character and his talents, celebrated from his youth as a poet, as a passionate admirer of antiquity, and as a translator of Homer, was the first in Germany to set the example of these new conversions, and he has had some imitators. The most illustrious friends of the Count

Stolberg, Klopstock, Voss, and Jacobi, separated themselves from him in consequence of this action, which seemed to disavow the misfortunes and the struggles which the reformed have endured during three centuries; nevertheless, Made Stolberg has lately published a History of the Religion of Jesus Christ, which is calculated to merit the approbation of all Christian communities. It is the first time that we have seen the Catholic opinions defended in this manner; and if Count Stolberg had not been educated as a Protestant, perhaps he would not have had that independence of mind which enables him to make an impression upon enlightened men. We find in this book a perfect knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and very interesting researches into the different religions of Asia, which bear relation to Christianity. The Germans of the North, even when they submit to the most positive doctrines, know how to give them the stamp of their philosophy.

Count Stolberg, in his publication, attributed to the Old Testament a much greater importance than Protestant writers in general assign to it. I consider sacrifices as the basis of all religion; and the death of Abel as the

first type of that sacrifice which forms the groundwork of Christianity. In whatever way we decide upon this opinion, it affords much room for thought. The greater part of ancient religions instituted human sacrifices; but in this barbarity there was something remarkable, namely, the necessity of a solemn expiation. Nothing, in effect, can obliterate from the soul the idea, that there is a mysterious efficacy in the blood of the innocent, and that heaven and earth are moved by it. Men have always believed that the just could obtain, in this life or the other, the pardon of the guilty. There are some primitive ideas in the human species which re-appear with more or less disfigurement, in all times, and among all nations. These are the ideas upon which we cannot grow weary of reflecting; for they assuredly preserve some traces of the lost dignities of our nature.

The persuasion, that the prayers and the self-devotion of the just can save the guilty, is doubtless derived from the feelings that we experience in the relations of life; but nothing obliges us, in respect to religious belief, to reject these inferences. What do we know better than our feelings? and why

should we pretend that they are inapplicable to the truths of religion? What can there be in man but himself, and why, under the pretext of anthropomorphism, hinder him from forming an image of the Deity after his own soul? No other messenger, I think, can bring him news from heaven.

Count Stolberg endeavours to show, that the tradition of the fall of man has existed among all the nations of the earth, and particularly in the East; and that all men have in their hearts the remembrance of a happiness of which they have been deprived. In effect, there are in the human mind two tendencies as distinct as gravitation and attraction in the natural world; these are the ideas of decay, and of advance to perfection. One should say, that we feel at once a regret for the loss of some excellent qualities which were gratuitously conferred upon us, and a hope of some advantages which we may acquire by our own efforts; in such a manner, that the doctrine of perfectibility, and that of the golden age, united and confounded, excite at the same time in man grief for having lost these blessings, and emulation to recover them. The sentiment is melancholy, and the spirit is daring; and from this reverie

and this energy together, springs the true superiority of man; that mixture of contemplation and of activity, of resignation and of will, which allows him to connect his worldly existence with heaven.

Stolberg calls those persons alone Christians who receive the words of the Holy Scriptures with the simplicity of children; but he bestows upon the signification of these words a philosophical spirit which takes away all their dogmatism and intolerance from the Catholic opinions. In what then do they differ, these religious men by whom Germany is honoured, and why should the names of Catholic and Protestant divide them? Why should they be unfaithful to the tombs of their ancestors, by giving up these names, or by resuming them? Has not Klopstock consecrated his whole life to the purpose of making a fine poem the temple of the Gospel? Is not Herder, as well as Stolberg, the adorer of the Bible? Does he not penetrate into all the beauties of the primitive language, and of those sentiments of celestial origin which it expresses? Jacobi—does he not recognise the Divinity in all the great thoughts of man? Would any of these men recommend religion merely as

a restraint upon the people, as an instrument of public safety, as an additional guarantee in the contracts of this world? Do they not all know that every superior mind has more need of piety than the common herd? For the labour obtained by the authority of society may occupy and direct the working class in all the moments of life, whilst idle men are incessantly the prey of the passions and the sophistries that disturb existence, and put every thing into uncertainty.

It has been pretended that it was a sort of frivolity in the German writers to represent as one of the merits of the Christian religion, the favourable influence that it exercised over the arts, imagination, and poetry: and the same reproach, with respect to this point, has been cast upon that beautiful work of M. de Chateaubriant, the Genius of Christianity. The truly frivolous minds are those which take rapid glances for profound examinations, and persuade themselves that we can proceed with nature upon an exclusive principle, and suppress the greater part of the desires and wants of the soul. One of the great proofs of the divinity of the Christian religion is its perfect analogy with all our moral faculties; at least it does not

appear to me that we can consider the poetry of Christianity under the same aspect as the poetry of Paganism.

As every thing was external in the Pagan worship, the pomp of images was there prodigally exhibited; the sanctuary of Christianity being at the bottom of the heart, the poetry which it inspires must always flow from tenderness. It is not the splendour of the Christian heaven that we can oppose to Olympus, but grief and innocence, old age and death, which assume a character of exaltation and of repose, under the shelter of those religious hopes, whose wings are spread over the miseries of life. It is not then true, it appears to me, that the Protestant religion is unprovided with poetry, because the ritual of its worship has less eclat than that of the Catholics. Ceremonies, better or worse, performed according to the richness of towns, and the magnificence of buildings, cannot be the principal cause of the impression which divine service produces; its connexion with our internal feelings is that which touches us, a connexion which can subsist in simplicity as well as in pomp.

Some time ago I was present at a church in the country, deprived of all ornament;

no picture adorned its white walls; it was newly built, and no remembrance of a long antiquity rendered it venerable: music itself, which the most austere saints have placed in heaven as the employment of the happy, was hardly heard; and the psalms were sung by voices without harmony, which the labour of the wood, and the weight of years, rendered hoarse and confused: but in the midst of this rustic assembly, where all human splendour was deficient, one saw a pious man, whose heart was profoundly moved by the mission which he fulfilled *. His looks, his physiognomy, might serve for a model to some of the pictures with which other temples are adorned; his accents made the responses to an angelic concert. There was before us a mortal creature convinced of our immortality; of that of our friends whom we have lost; of that of our children, who will survive us by so little in the career of time! and the convincing persuasion of a pure heart appeared a new revelation.

He descended from his pulpit to give the communion to the faithful, who live under the shelter of his example. His son was with him, a minister of the church; and,

* Mr. Celerier, preacher of Celigny, near Geneva.

with more youthful features, his countenance also, like that of his father, had a pious and thoughtful expression. Then, according to custom, the father and the son gave each other the bread and wine, which, among Protestants, serve for the commemoration of the most affecting of mysteries. The son only saw in his father a pastor more advanced than himself in the religious state that he had chosen to adopt; the father respected in his son the holy calling he had embraced. They mutually addressed each other, as they took the Sacrament, in those passages of the Gospel which are calculated to unite in one bond strangers and friends; and, both feeling in their hearts the same inward impulses, they appeared to forget their personal relations in the presence of the Divinity, before whom fathers and sons are alike servants of the tombs, and children of hope.

What poetical effect, what emotion, the source of all poetry, could be wanting to the divine service at such a moment!

Men, whose affections are disinterested, and their thoughts religious; men who live in the sanctuary of their conscience, and know how to concentrate in it, as in a burn-

ing-glass, all the rays of the universe; these men, I say, are the priests of the religion of the soul; and nothing ought ever to disunite them. An abyss separates those who conduct themselves according to calculation, and those who are guided by feeling. All other differences of opinion are nothing; this alone is radical. It is possible that one day a cry of union may be raised, and that all Christians may aspire to profess the same theological, political, and moral religion; but before this miracle is accomplished, all men who have a heart, and who obey it, ought mutually to respect each other.

CHAPTER V.

Of the religious Disposition called Mysticism.

THE religious disposition called Mysticism, is only a more inward manner of feeling and of conceiving Christianity. As in the word Mysticism is comprehended that of Mystery, it has been believed that the Mystics professed extraordinary doctrines, and formed a separate sect. There are no mysteries among them, but the mysteries of sentiment applied to religion; and sentiment is at once the clearest, the most simple, and the most inexplicable of things: it is necessary, at the same time, to distinguish the *Theosophists*, that is to say, those who are busied with philosophical theology, such as Jacob Boëhmen, St. Martin, &c. from the simple Mystics; the former wish to penetrate the secret of the creation; the second confine themselves to their own hearts. Many fathers of the Church, Thomas-à-Kempis, Fenelon, St. François-de-Sales, &c.; and among the Protestants a great number of English and German writers, have been Mystics; that

is to say, men who have made religion a sort of affection, and have infused it into all their thoughts, as well as all their actions.

The religious feeling, which is the foundation of the whole doctrine of the Mystics, consists in an internal peace full of life. The agitations of the passions leave no calm; the tranquillity of a dry and moderate understanding destroys the animation of the soul; it is only in religious feeling that we find a perfect union of repose and motion. This disposition is not continual, I think, in any man, however pious he may be; but the remembrance and the hope of these holy emotions decide the conduct of those who have experienced them. If we consider the pains and the pleasures of life as the effect of chance, or of a well-played game, then despair and joy ought to be (if we may use the expression) convulsive motions. For what a chance is that which disposes of our existence! what pride, or what respect, ought we not to feel, when we have been considering a mode of action which may influence our destiny? To what torments of uncertainty must we not be delivered up, if our reason alone disposed of our fate in this world? But if we believe, on the contrary, that there are

but two things important to happiness, purity of intention, and resignation to the event, whatever it may be, when it no longer depends upon ourselves; doubtless many circumstances will still make us cruelly suffer, but none will break our ties to Heaven. To struggle against the impossible, is that which begets in us the most bitter feelings; and the anger of Satan is nothing else than liberty quarrelling with necessity, and unable either to subdue or to submit to it.

The ruling opinion among the mystical Christians is this, that the only homage which can please God is that of the will, which he gave to man: what more disinterested offering can we, in effect, offer to the Divinity? Worship, incense, hymns, have almost always for their object the attainment of the good things of this world, and it is on this account that worldly flattery surrounds monarchs: but to resign ourselves to the will of God, to wish nothing but that which he wishes, is the most pure religious act of which the soul is capable. Thrice is man summoned to yield this resignation; in youth, in manhood, and in age: happy are they who submit at first!

It is pride in every thing which puts the

venom into the wound: the rebellious soul accuses Heaven; the religious man suffers grief to act upon him as the intention of Him who sent it; he makes use of all the means in his power to avoid or to console it; but when the event is irrevocable, the sacred characters of the supreme will are imprinted there.

What accidental malady can be compared to age and death? And yet almost all men resign themselves to age and death, because they have no defence against them: whence then does it arise that every one revolts against particular misfortunes, when all acquiesce in universal evil? It is because we treat destiny as a government which we allow to make all the world suffer, provided that it grants no privileges to any one. The misfortunes that we endure in company with our fellows are as severe, and cause as much misery, as our individual sufferings; and yet they hardly ever excite in us the same rebellious feeling. Why do not men teach themselves that they ought to support that which concerns them personally, as they support the condition of humanity in general? It is because we fancy there is injustice in

our particular allotment.—Singular pride of man! to wish to judge the Deity with that instrument which he has received from him! What does he know of the feelings of another? What does he know of himself? What does he know at all, except his internal feeling? And this feeling, the more inward it is, the more it contains the secret of our felicity; for is it not in the bottom of our soul that we feel happiness or unhappiness? Religious love, or self-love, alone penetrates to the source of our most hidden thoughts. Under the name of religious love are included all the disinterested affections; and under that of self-love all egotistical propensities: in whatever manner fortune may favour or thwart us, it is always the ascendancy of one of these affections over the other, upon which calm enjoyment, or uneasy disquiet, depends.

It is to be wanting entirely in respect for Providence, as it appears to me, to suppose ourselves a prey to those phantoms which we call events: their reality consists in their effect upon the soul; and there is a perfect equality between all situations and all circumstances, not viewed externally, but

judged according to their influence upon religious improvement. If each of us would attentively examine the texture of his life, we should find there two tissues perfectly distinct: the one which appears entirely subject to natural causes and effects; the other, whose mysterious tendency is not intelligible except by dint of time. It is like a suit of tapestry hangings, whose figures are worked in on the wrong side, until, being put in a proper position, we can judge of their effect. We end by perceiving, even in this life, why we have suffered; why we have not obtained what we desired. The melioration of our own hearts reveals to us the benevolent intention which subjected us to pain; for the prosperities of the earth themselves would have something dreadful about them, if they fell upon us after we had been guilty of great faults: we should then think ourselves abandoned by the hand of Him, who delivered us up to happiness here below, as to our sole futurity.

Either every thing is chance, or there is no such thing in the world; and, if there is not, religious feeling consists in making ourselves harmonize with the universal order, in spite of that spirit of rebellion and of usurpa-

tion with which selfishness inspires each of us individually. All doctrines, and all modes of worship, are the different forms which this religious feeling has assumed according to times and countries; it may be depraved by fear, although it is built upon confident hope; but it always consists in the conviction, that there is nothing accidental in the events of life, and that our sole manner of influencing our fate lies in our internal commerce with ourselves. Reason is not the less operative in all that relates to the conduct of life; but when this *housekeeper of existence* has managed matters as well as it can, the bottom of our heart is after all the seat of love; and that which is called Mysticism, is this love in its most perfect purity.

The elevation of the soul towards its Creator is the supreme act of worship among the Christian Mystics; but they do not address the Deity to pray for this or that worldly advantage. A French writer, who has some sublimely bright passages, M. de Saint-Martin, has said, *that prayer was the breathing of the soul.* The Mystics are, for the most part, convinced, that an answer is given to this prayer; and that the grand revelation of Christianity may be in some de-

gree renewed in the soul, every time that it exalts itself with fervour towards Heaven. When we believe that there no longer exists any immediate communication between the Supreme Being and man, prayer is only a monologue, if we may be allowed the expression; but it becomes an act much more beneficial, when we are persuaded that the Divinity makes himself sensibly felt at the bottom of our hearts. In fact, it does not appear to me possible to deny, that there are emotions within us which do not, in the least, take their origin from external things, and which soothe and support us without the possibility of our attributing them to the ordinary concatenation of the events of life.

Men who have introduced self-love into a doctrine entirely founded on the renunciation of self-love, have taken advantage of these unexpected instances of divine support, to deceive themselves with illusions of every description: they have fancied that they were elect persons, or prophets; they have believed in visions; in a word, they have become superstitious in looking at themselves. What must not be the power of human pride, when it insinuates itself

into the heart, under the very shape of humility! But it is not the less true, that there is nothing more simple and more pure than the connexions of the soul with the Deity, such as they are conceived by those whom it is the custom to call Mystics; that is to say, the Christians who introduce love into religion.

In reading the spiritual works of Fenelon, who is not softened? where can we find so much knowledge, consolation, indulgence? There no fanaticism, no austerities but those of virtue, no intolerance, no exclusion appear. The differences of Christian communities cannot be felt at that height which is above all the accidental forms created and destroyed by time.

He would be very rash, assuredly, who was to hazard foreseeing any thing relating to such important matters: nevertheless, I will venture to say, that every thing tends to establish the triumph of religious feeling in the soul. Calculation has gained such an empire over the affairs of the world, that those who do not embrace it are naturally thrown into the opposite extreme. It is for this reason that solitary thinkers, from one end of the world to the other, endeavour to assemble in one

focus the scattered rays of literature, philosophy, and religion.

It is generally feared that the doctrine of religious resignation, called Quietism in the last ages, will disgust us with the necessary activity of this life. But nature takes care to raise individual passions in us sufficiently to prevent our entertaining much fears of the sentiment that is to tranquillize them.

We neither dispose of our birth, nor of our death; and more than three fourths of our destiny is decided by these two events. No one can change the primitive effects of his nativity, of his country, of his period, &c. No one can acquire the shape or the genius that he has not gained from nature; and of how many more commanding circumstances still is not life composed? If our fate consists of a hundred different lots, there are ninety-nine which do not depend upon ourselves; and all the fury of our will turns upon the weak portion which yet seems to be in our favour. Now the action of the will itself upon this weak portion is singularly incomplete. The only act of liberty of the man who always attains his end, is the fulfilment of duty: the issue of all other resolutions depends entirely upon accidents, over which

prudence itself has no command. The greater part of mankind does not obtain that which it vehemently wishes; and prosperity itself, when it comes, often comes from an unexpected quarter.

The doctrine of Mysticism passes for a severe doctrine, because it enjoins us to discard selfishness, and this with reason appears very difficult to be done. But, in fact, Mysticism is the gentlest of all doctrines; it consists in this proverb, *make a virtue of necessity*. Making a virtue of necessity, in the religious sense, is to attribute to Providence the government of the world, and to find an inward consolation in this thought. The Mystic writers exact nothing beyond the line of duty, such as honest men have marked it out; they do not enjoin us to create troubles for ourselves; they think that man ought neither to invite affliction, nor be impatient under it when it arrives. What evil then can result from this belief, which unites the calm of stoicism with the sensibility of Christians? "It prevents us from loving," some one may say. Ah! it is not religious exaltation which chills the soul: a single interest of vanity has done more to annihilate the affections than any kind of austere opi-

nion: even the deserts of the Thebaïd do not weaken the power of sentiment; and nothing prevents us from loving but the misery of the heart.

A very weighty inconvenience is falsely attributed to Mysticism. It has been said that it renders us too indulgent in relation to actions, by referring religion to the internal impressions of the soul; and that it induces men to resign themselves to their defects as to inevitable events. Nothing, assuredly, would be more contrary to the Gospel than this manner of interpreting submission to the will of God. If we admitted that religious feeling, in any respect, dispensed with action, there would not only result from this a crowd of hypocrites, who pretended that we must not judge them by the vulgar proofs of religion, which are called works, and that their secret communications with the Deity are of an order greatly superior to the fulfilment of duties; but there would be also hypocrites with themselves, and we should destroy in this manner the power of remorse. In fact, who has not some moments of religious tenderness, however limited his imagination may be? Who has not sometimes prayed with fervour? And if this was suf-

ficient for us to be released from the strict observance of duty, the greater part of poets might fancy themselves more religious than St. Vincent de Paul.

But the Mystics have been wrongfully accused of this manner of thinking. Their writings and their lives attest, that they are as regular in their moral conduct as those who are subjected to the practices of the most severe mode of worship: that which is called indulgence in them, is the penetration which makes us analyse the nature of man, instead of confining ourselves to the injunction of obedience. The Mystics, always considering the bottom of the heart, have the air of pardoning its mistakes, because they study the causes of them.

The Mystics, and almost all Christians, have been frequently accused of a tendency towards passive obedience to authority, whatever it may be; and it has been pretended, that submission to the will of God, ill understood, leads a little too often to submission to the will of man. Nothing, however, is less like condescension to power than religious resignation. Without doubt it may console us in slavery, but it is because it then gives to the soul all the virtues of indepen-

dence. To be indifferent by religion to the liberty or the oppression of mankind, would be to mistake weakness of character for Christian humility, and no two things are more different. Christian humility bends before the poor and the unhappy; and weakness of character always keeps well with guilt, because it is powerful in the world.

In the times of chivalry, when Christianity had more ascendancy, it never demanded the sacrifice of honour; but, for citizens, justice and liberty are also honour. God confounds human pride, but not the dignity of the human race; for this pride consists in the opinion we have of ourselves; and this dignity in our respect for the rights of others. Religious men have an inclination not to meddle with the affairs of this world, without being compelled to do so by some manifest duty; and it must be confessed, that so many passions are excited by political interests, that it is rare to mix in politics without having to reproach ourselves with any wrong action: but when the courage of conscience is called forth, there is nothing which can contend with it.

Of all nations, that which has the greatest inclination to Mysticism is the German. Be-

fore Luther, many authors, among whom we must cite Tauler, had written upon religion in this sense. Since Luther, the Moravians have shown this disposition more than any other sect. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Lavater combated with great strength the system of *rational* Christianity, which the theologians of Berlin had supported; and his manner of feeling religion is, in many respects, completely like that of Fenelon. Several lyric poets, from Klopstock down to our days, have a taint of Mysticism in their compositions. The Protestant religion, which reigns in the North, does not satisfy the imagination of the Germans; and Catholicism being opposed by its nature to philosophical researches, the religious and thinking among the Germans were necessarily obliged to have recourse to a method of feeling religion, which might be applied to every form of worship. Besides, idealism in philosophy has much analogy with Mysticism in religion; the one places all the reality of things in this world in thought, and the other all the reality of things in heaven in feeling.

The Mystics penetrate, with an inconceivable sagacity, into every thing which

gives birth in the human mind to fear or hope, to suffering or to happiness; and no sect ascends as they do to the origin of emotions in the soul. There is so much interest in this sort of inquiry, that even those who are otherwise of moderate understanding enough, when they have the least mystical inclination in their hearts, attract and captivate by their conversation, as if they were endowed with transcendent genius. That which makes society so subject to ennui, is, that the greater portion of those with whom we live, talk only of external objects; and upon this class of things the want of the spirit of conversation is very perceptible. But religious Mysticism includes so extensive a knowledge, that it gives a decided moral superiority to those who have not received it from nature: they apply themselves to the study of the human heart, which is the first of sciences, and give themselves as much trouble to understand the passions, that they may lull them to rest, as the men of the world do to turn them to advantage.

Without doubt, great faults may still appear in the character of those whose doctrine is the most pure: but is it to their doctrine that we should refer them? We

pay especial homage to religion by the exactions we make from all religious men the moment we know they are so. We call them inconsistent if they commit any transgressions, or have any weaknesses; and yet nothing can entirely change the conditions of humanity. If religion always conferred moral perfection upon us, and if virtue always led to happiness, freedom of will would no longer exist; for the motives which acted upon volition, would be too powerful for liberty.

Dogmatical religion is a commandment; mystical religion is built upon the inward experience of our heart: the mode of preaching must necessarily be influenced by the direction which the ministers of the Gospel may take in this respect; and perhaps it would be desirable for us to perceive in their discourses more of the influence of those feelings which begin to penetrate all hearts. In Germany, where every sect abounds, Zollikoffer, Jerusalem, and many others, have gained themselves a great reputation by the eloquence of the pulpit; and we may read upon all subjects a quantity of sermons which contain excellent things: nevertheless, although it is very wise to teach morality, it is

still more important to inspire motives to be moral; and these motives consist, above every thing, in religious emotion. Almost all men are nearly equally informed as to the inconveniencies and the advantages of vice and virtue; but that which all the world wants, is the strengthening of the internal disposition with which we struggle against the violent inclinations of our nature.

If the whole business was to argue well with mankind, why should those parts of the service, which are only songs and ceremonies, lead us so much more than sermons to meditation and to piety? The greater part of preachers confine themselves to declaiming against evil inclinations, instead of showing how we yield to them, and how we resist them; the greater part of preachers are judges who direct the trial of men: but the priests of God ought to tell us what they suffer and what they hope; how they have modified their characters by certain thoughts; in a word, we expect from them the secret memoirs of the soul in its relations with the Deity.

Prohibitory laws are no more sufficient for the government of individuals than of states. The social system is obliged to put animated

interests into action, to give aliment to human life: it is the same with the religious instructors of man; they can only preserve him from his passions by exciting a living and pure ecstacy in his heart: the passions are much better, in many respects, than a servile apathy; and nothing can moderate them but a profound sentiment, the enjoyments of which we ought to describe, if we can, with as much force and truth as we have introduced into our descriptions of the charms of earthly affections.

Whatever men of wit may have said, there exists a natural alliance between religion and genius. The Mystics have almost all a bias towards poetry and the fine arts; their ideas are in accord with true superiority of every sort, while incredulous and worldly-minded mediocrity is its enemy:—that mediocrity cannot endure those who wish to penetrate into the soul: as it has put its best qualities on the surface, to touch the core is to discover its wretchedness.

The philosophy of Idealism, the Christianity of Mysticism, and the poetry of nature, have, in many respects, all the same end and the same origin: these philosophers, these Christians, and these poets, all unite

in one common desire. They would wish to substitute for the factitious system of society, not the ignorance of barbarous times, but an intellectual culture, which leads us back to simplicity by the very perfection of knowledge: they would, in short, wish to make energetic and reflecting, sincere and generous men, out of all these characters without dignity; these minds without ideas; these jesters without gaiety; these Epicureans without imagination, who, for want of better, are called the human species.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Pain.

THAT axiom of the Mystics has been much blamed, which asserts *that pain is a good.* Some philosophers of antiquity have pronounced it not an evil; it is, however, much more difficult to consider it with indifference than with hope. In effect, if we were not convinced that pain was the means of moral improvement, to what an excess of irritation would it not carry us? Why in that case summon us into life to be consumed by pain? Why concentrate all the torments and all the wonders of the universe in a weak heart, which fears and which desires? Why give us the power of loving, and snatch from us at last all that we hold dear? In short, why bring us to death, terrific death? When the illusion of the world has made us forget it, how is it recalled to our minds! It is in the midst of the splendours of this world that Death unfurls his fatal ensign.

Così trapassa al trapassar d' un giorno
Della vita mortal il fiore e'l verde;
Ne perchè faccia indietro April ritorno,
Si rinfiora ella Mai ne si rinverde*.

We have seen at a fête that Princess †, who, although the mother of eight children, still united the charm of perfect beauty to all the dignity of the maternal character. She opened the ball; and the melodious sounds of music gave a signal for the moments consecrated to joy. Flowers adorned her lovely head; and dress and the dance must have recalled to her the first days of her youth: nevertheless, she appeared already to fear the very pleasures to which so much success might have attached her. Alas! in what a manner was this vague presentiment realized! —On a sudden the numberless torches, which restored the splendour of the day, are about to be changed into devouring flames, and the most dreadful sufferings will take place of the gorgeous luxury of the fête.—What a contrast! and who can grow weary of re-

* "Thus withers in a day the verdure and the flower of "mortal life; it is in vain that the month of spring returns "in its season; life never resumes her verdure or her "flowers."—Verses of Tasso, sung in the gardens of Armida.

† The Princess Paulina of Schwartzenberg.

flecting upon it? No, never have the grandeur and the misery of man so closely approached each other; and our fickle thoughts, so easily diverted from the dark threatenings of futurity, have been struck in the same hour with all the brilliant and terrible images which destiny, in general, scatters at a distance from each other over the path of time.

No accident, however, had reached her, who would not have died but for her own choice. She was in safety; she might have renewed the thread of that life of virtue which she had been leading for fifteen years; but one of her daughters was still in danger, and the most delicate and timid of beings precipitates herself into the midst of flames which would have made warriors recoil. Every mother would have felt what she did! But who thinks she has sufficient strength to imitate her? Who can reckon so much upon their soul, as not to fear those shudderings which Nature bids us feel at the sight of a violent death? A woman braved them; her hand seized that of her daughter, her hand saved her daughter; and although the fatal blow then struck her, her last act was maternal; her last act preserved the object of her affection; it was at this sublime in-

stant that she appeared before God; and it was impossible to recognise what remained of her upon earth except by the impression on a medal, given by her children, which also marked the place where this angel perished. Ah! all that is horrible in this picture is softened by the rays of a celestial glory. This generous Paulina will hereafter be the saint of mothers; and if their looks do not dare to rise to Heaven, they will rest them upon her sweet figure, and will ask her to implore the blessing of God upon their children.

If we had gone so far as to dry up the source of religion upon earth, what should we say to those who see the purest of victims fall? What should we say to those who loved this victim? and with what despair, with what horror for Fortune and her perfidious secrets, would not the soul be filled?

Not only what we see, but what we imagine, would strike our minds like a thunderbolt, if there was nothing within us free from the power of chance. Have not men lived in an obscure dungeon, where every moment was a pang, where there was no air but what was sufficient for them to begin suffering again? Death, according to the

incredulous, will deliver us from every thing; but do they know what death is? do they know whether this death is annihilation? or into what a labyrinth of terrors reflection without a guide may drag us?

If an honest man (and the events of a life exposed to the passions may bring on this misfortune)—if an honest man, I say, had done an irreparable injury to an innocent being, how could he ever be consoled for it without the assistance of religious expiation? When his victim is in the coffin, to whom must he address his sorrows if there is no communication with that victim; if God himself does not make the dead hear the lamentations of the living; if the sovereign Mediator for man did not say to Grief,—It is enough; and to Repentance,—You are forgiven?—It is thought that the chief advantage of religion is its efficacy in awakening remorse; but it is also very frequently the means of lulling remorse to sleep. There are souls in which the past is predominant; there are those which regret tears to pieces like an active death, and upon which memory falls as furiously as a vulture; it is for them that religion operates as the alleviation of remorse.

An idea always the same, and yet assuming a thousand different dresses, fatigues at once, by its agitation and its monotony. The fine arts, which redoubled the power of imagination, augment with it the vivacity of pain. Nature herself becomes importunate when the soul is no longer in harmony with her; her tranquillity, which we once found so sweet, irritates us like indifference; the wonders of the universe grow dim as we gaze upon them; all looks like a vision, even in mid-day splendour. Night troubles us, as if the darkness concealed some secret misfortune of our own; and the shining sun appears to insult the mourning of our hearts. Whither shall we fly then from so many sufferings? Is it to death? But the anxiety of happiness makes us doubt whether there is rest in the tomb; and despair, even for atheists, is as a shadowy revelation of an eternity of pains. What shall we do then, what shall we do, O my God! if we cannot throw ourselves into your paternal bosom? He who first called God our Father, knew more of the human heart than the most profound thinkers of the age.

It is not true that religion narrows the

heart; it is still less so, that the severity of religious principles is to be feared. I only know one sort of severity which is to be dreaded by feeling minds; it is that of the men of the world. These are the persons who conceive nothing, who excuse nothing that is involuntary; they have made a human heart according to their own will, in order to judge it at their leisure. We might address to them what was said to Messrs. de Port Royal, who, otherwise, deserved much admiration: "It is easy for you to comprehend "the man you have created; but, as to the "real being, you know him not."

The greater part of men of the world are accustomed to frame certain dilemmas upon all the unhappy situations in life, in order to disencumber themselves as much as possible from the compassion which these situations demand from them.—"There are but "two parts to take," they say: "you must "be entirely one thing, or the other; you "must support what you cannot prevent; "you must console yourself for what is "irrevocable." Or rather, "He who wishes "an end, wishes the means also; you must "do every thing to preserve that which you "cannot do without," &c. and a thousand

other axioms of this sort, which all of them have the form of proverbs, and which are in effect the code of vulgar wisdom. But what connexion is there between these axioms and the severe afflictions of the heart? All this observes very well in the common affairs of life; but how apply such counsels to moral pains? They all vary according to the individual, and are composed of a thousand different circumstances, unknown to every one but our most intimate friend, if there is one who knows how to identify himself with us. Every character is almost a new world for him who can observe it with sagacity; and I know not in the science of the human heart one general idea which is completely applicable to particular examples.

The language of religion can alone suit every situation and every mode of feeling. When we read the reveries of J. J. Rousseau, that eloquent picture of a being, preyed upon by an imagination stronger than himself, I have asked myself how a man whose understanding was formed by the world, and a religious recluse, would have endeavoured to console Rousseau? He would have complained of being hated and persecuted; he

would have called himself the object of universal envy, and the victim of a conspiracy, which extended even from the people to their monarchs; he would have pretended that all his friends had betrayed him; and that the very services, which they had rendered him, were so many snares: what then would the man of an understanding formed by society have answered to all these complaints?

"You strangely exaggerate," he would have said, "the effect that you fancy you "produce; you are doubtless a very distin- "guished person; but, however, as each of "us has his own affairs, and also his own "ideas, a book does not fill all heads; "the events of war or of peace, and still "less interests, but which personally con- "cern ourselves, occupy us much more than "any writer, however celebrated he may "be. They have banished you, it is true; "but all countries ought to be alike to a "philosopher such as you are; and to what "purpose indeed can the morals and the re- "ligion, which you develope so well in your "writings, be turned, if you are not able "to support the reverses which have be- "fallen you?

"Without doubt there are some persons "who envy you among the fraternity of "learned men; but this cannot extend to "the classes of society, who trouble themselves very little with literature; besides, "if celebrity really annoys you, nothing is "so easy as to escape from it. Write no "more; at the end of a few years you will "be forgotten; and you will be as quiet as "if you never had published any thing. "You say that your friends lay snares for "you, while they pretend to serve you. In "the first place, is it not possible that there "should be a slight degree of romantic "exaltation in your manner of considering "your personal relations? Your fine imagination was necessary to compose the "New Heloise; but a little reason is requisite in the affairs of this world, and when "we choose to do so, we see things as they "are. If, however, your friends deceive "you, you must break with them; but you "will be very unwise to grieve on this account; for, one of two things, either they "are worthy of your esteem, and in that "case you are wrong to suspect them; or, "if your suspicions are well founded, then "you ought not to regret such friends."

After having heard this dilemma, J. J. Rousseau might very well have taken a third part, that of throwing himself into the river; but what would the religious recluse have said to him?

"My son, I know not the world, and I "am ignorant if it be true that they wish "you ill in that world; but if it were so, "you would share this fate with all good "men, who nevertheless have pardoned "their enemies; for Jesus Christ and So- "crates, the God and the man, have set "the example. It is necessary for hateful "passions to exist here below, in order that "the trial of the just should be accom- "plished. Saint Theresa has said of the "wicked—*Unhappy men, they do not love!* "and yet they live, long enough to have "time for repentance.

"You have received admirable gifts from "Heaven; if they have made you love what "is good, have you not already enjoyed the "reward of having been a soldier of Truth "upon earth? If you have softened hearts "by your persuasive eloquence, you will "obtain for yourself some of those tears "which you have caused to flow. You "have enemies near you; but friends at a

" distance, among the votaries of solitude,
" who read you; and you have consoled the
" unfortunate better than we can console
" yourself. Why have I not your talent to
" make you listen to me? That talent, my
" son, is a noble gift; men often try to
" asperse it; they tell you, wrongfully, that
" we condemn it in the name of God: this
" is not true. It is a divine emotion, which
" inspires eloquence; and if you have not
" abused it, learn to endure envy, for such
" a superiority is well worth the pain it may
" make you suffer.

" Nevertheless, my son, I fear that pride
" is mixed with your sufferings; and this it
" is which gives them their bitterness; for
" all the griefs that continue humble make
" our tears flow gently; but there is a poison
" in pride, and man becomes senseless when
" he yields to it: it is an enemy that makes
" her own champion, the better to destroy
" him.

" Genius ought only to serve for the
" display of the supreme goodness of the
" soul. There are many men who have
" this goodness, without the talent of ex-
" pressing it: thank God, from whom you
" inherit the charm of language, which is

" formed to enchant the imagination of man.
" But be not proud, except of the feeling
" which dictates it. Every thing in life will
" be rendered calm for you, if you always
" continue religiously good: the wicked
" themselves grow tired of doing evil; their
" own poison exhausts them; and, besides,
" is not God above, to take care of the
" sparrow that falls, and of the heart of man
" that suffers?

" You say that your friends wish to
" betray you. Take care that you do not
" accuse them unjustly: woe to him that has
" repelled a sincere affection; for they are
" the angels of heaven who send it us; they
" have reserved this part to themselves in
" the destiny of man. Suffer not your
" imagination to lead you astray: you must
" permit her to wander in the regions of the
" clouds; but nothing except one heart can
" judge another; and you would be very
" culpable if you were to forget a sincere
" friendship; for the beauty of the soul
" consists in its generous confidence, and
" human prudence is figured by a serpent.

" It is possible, however, that in expia-
" tion of some transgressions, into which
" your great abilities have led you, you will

" be condemned upon this earth to drink
" that empoisoned cup, the treachery of a
" friend. If it is so, I lament your fate:
" the Divinity himself laments it, while he
" punishes you. But do not revolt against
" his blows; still love, although love has
" distracted your heart. In the most pro-
" found solitude, in the cruellest isolation,
" we must not suffer the source of the de-
" voted affections to be dried up within us.
" For a long while it was not believed that
" God could be loved as we love those who
" resemble ourselves. A voice which answers
" us, looks which are interchanged with our
" own, appear full of life, while the immense
" Heaven is silent, but by degrees the soul
" exalts itself even to feel its God near it as
" a friend.

" My son, we ought to pray as we
" love, by mingling prayer with all our
" thoughts; we ought to pray, for then we
" are no more alone; and when resignation
" shall descend softly into your heart, turn
" your eyes upon nature; it might be said,
" that every one there finds again his past
" life, when no traces of it exist among
" men. I think of your regrets as well as
" your pleasures, when you contemplate

" those clouds, sometimes dark and some-
" times brilliant, which the wind scatters;
" and whether death has snatched your
" friends from you, or life, still more cruel,
" has broken asunder your bonds of union
" with them, you will perceive in the stars
" their deified images; they will appear to
" you such as you will see them again here-
" after."

CHAPTER VII.

Of the religious Philosophers called Theosophists.

When I gave an account of the modern philosophy of the Germans, I endeavoured to trace the line of demarcation between that philosophy which attempts to penetrate the secrets of the universe, and that which is confined to an inquiry into the nature of our own souls. The same distinction may be remarked among religious writers; those of whom I have already spoken in the preceding chapters have kept to the influence of religion upon our hearts; others, such as Jacob Boëhmen in Germany, St. Martin in France, and very many more, have believed, that they found in the relation of Christianity mysterious words, which might serve to develope the laws of creation. We must confess, when we begin to think, it is difficult to stop; and whether reflection leads to scepticism or to the most universal faith, we are sometimes tempted to pass

whole hours, like the Faquirs, in asking ourselves what is life? Far from despising those who are thus devoured by contemplation, we cannot help considering them as the true lords of the human species, in whose presence those who exist without reflection, are only vassals attached to the soil. But how can we flatter ourselves with the hope of giving any consistency to these thoughts, which, like flashes of lightning, plunge themselves again into darkness, after having for a moment thrown an uncertain brilliance upon surrounding objects?

It may, however, be interesting to point out the principal direction of the systems of the Theosophists; that is to say, of those religious philosophers who have always existed in Germany from the establishment of Christianity, and particularly since the revival of letters. The greater part of the Greek philosophers have built the system of the world upon the action of the elements; and if we except Pythagoras and Plato, who derived from the East their tendency to idealism, the thinking men of antiquity explain all the organization of the universe by physical laws. Christianity, by lighting up the internal life in the breast of man, na-

turally excited the mind to exaggerate its power over the body. The abuses to which the most pure doctrines are subject, have introduced visions and white magic (that is to say, the magic which attributes to the will of man the power of acting upon the elements without the intervention of infernal spirits), all the whimsical reveries, in short, which spring from the conviction that the soul is more powerful than nature. The sects of Alchymists, of Magnetizers, and of the Illuminated, are almost all supported upon this ascendancy of the will, which they carry much too far, but which, nevertheless, in some manner, belongs to the moral grandeur of man.

Not only has Christianity, by affirming the spiritual nature of the soul, led them to believe the unlimited power of religious or philosophical faith, but revelation has seemed, to some men, a continual miracle, which is capable of being renewed for every one of them; and some have sincerely believed, that a supernatural power of divination was granted them, and that truths were manifested in them, to which they testified more clearly than the inventors.

The most famous of these religious philo-

sophers was Jacob Boëhmen, who lived at the beginning of the seventeenth century: he made so much noise in his time, that Charles the First sent a person express to Gorlitz, the place of his abode, to study his work, and bring it back to England. Some of his writings have been translated into French by Monsieur de St. Martin; they are very difficult to comprehend; nevertheless, we cannot but be astonished that a man without cultivation of mind should have gone so far in the study of nature. He considers it in general as an emblem of the principal doctrines of Christianity; he fancies he sees every where, in the phænomena of the world, traces of the fall of man, and of his regeneration; the effects of the principle of anger, and of that of pity; and while the Greek philosophers attempted to explain the world, by the mixture of the elements of air, water, and fire, Jacob Boëhmen only admits the combination of moral forces, and has recourse to passages of the Gospel to interpret the universe.

In whatever manner we consider those singular writings, which for two hundred years have always found readers, or rather adepts, we cannot avoid remarking the two

opposite roads which are followed, in order to arrive at the truth, by the spiritual philosophers, and by the philosophers of materialism. The former imagine, that it is by divesting ourselves of all impressions from without, and by plunging into the ecstacy of thought, that we can interpret nature. The latter pretend, that we cannot too much guard against enthusiasm and imagination in our inquiry into the phænomena of the universe. They would seem to say, that the human understanding must be freed from matter or from mind to comprehend nature, while it is in the mysterious union of these two that the secret of existence consists.

Some learned men in Germany assert, that we find, in the works of Jacob Boëhmen, very profound views upon the physical world. We may say, at least, that there is as much originality in the theories of the religious philosophers concerning creation, as in those of Thales, of Xenophon, of Aristotle, of Descartes, and Leibnitz. The Theosophists declare, that what they think, has been revealed to them, while philosophers, in general, believe they are solely conducted by their own reason. But, as both one and the other aspire to know the mystery of mys-

teries, of what signification, at this high point, are the words of reason and folly? and why disgrace with the name of insensate persons those who believe they find great lights in their exaltation of mind? It is a movement of the soul of a very remarkable nature, and which assuredly has not been conferred upon us only for the sake of opposing it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the Spirit of Sectarism in Germany.

THE habit of meditation leads us to reveries of every kind upon human destiny; active life alone can divert our interest from the source of things; but all that is grand or absurd in respect to ideas is the result of that internal emotion which we cannot expend upon external objects. Many people are very angry with religious or philosophical sects, and give them the name of follies, and of dangerous follies. It appears to me that the wanderings even of thought are much less to be feared than the absence of thought, in respect to the repose and morality of men. When we have not within ourselves that power of reflection which supplies material activity, we must be incessantly in action, and frequently at random. The fanaticism of ideas has sometimes led, it is true, to violent actions, but it has almost always been because the advantages of this world have been sought for by the

aid of abstract opinions. Metaphysical systems are very little to be feared in themselves; they do not become dangerous till they are united to the interests of ambition, and it is therefore upon these interests that we must gain a hold, if we wish to modify such systems; but men who are capable of a lively attachment to an opinion, independently of the results which it may have, are always of a noble nature. The philosophical and religious sects, which, under different names, have existed in Germany, have hardly had any connexion with political affairs; and the sort of talent necessary to lead men to vigorous resolutions, has been rarely manifested in this country. We may dispute upon the philosophy of Kant, upon theological questions, upon idealism or empiricism, without producing any thing but books. The spirit of sect and the spirit of party differ in many points. The spirit of party represents opinions by that which is most prominent about them, in order to make the vulgar understand them; and the spirit of sect, particularly in Germany, always leads to what is most abstract. In the spirit of party we must seize the points of view taken by the multitude to place our-

selves among them; the Germans only think of Theory, and if she was to lose herself in the clouds, they would follow her there. The spirit of party stirs up certain common passions in men which unite them in a mass. The Germans subdivide every thing by means of distinction and comment. They have a philosophical sincerity singularly adapted to the inquiry after Truth, but not at all to the art of putting her into action. The spirit of sect aspires only to convince; that of party wishes to rally men round it. The former disputes about ideas, the latter wishes for power over men. There is discipline in the party spirit, and anarchy in the sectarian spirit. Authority, of whatever kind it may be, has hardly any thing to fear from the spirit of sectarism; we satisfy it by leaving a great latitude for thought at its disposal. But the spirit of party is not so easily contented, and does not confine itself to these intellectual contests, in which every individual may create an empire for himself without expelling one present possessor.

In France, they are much more susceptible of the party spirit than of the sectarian: every one there too well understands the reality of life, not to turn his wishes into

actions, and his thoughts into practice. But perhaps they are too foreign from the sectarian spirit: they do not sufficiently hold to abstract ideas, to have any warmth in defending them; besides, they do not choose to be bound by any sort of opinions, for the purpose of advancing the more freely in the face of all circumstances. There is more good faith in the spirit of sect than in the party spirit; the Germans, therefore, are naturally more fitted for one than the other.

We must distinguish three sorts of religious and philosophical sects in Germany; first, the different Christian communities which have existed (particularly at the epoch of the Reformation), when all writings have been directed towards theological questions; secondly, the secret associations; and lastly, the adepts of some particular systems, of which one man is the chief. We must range the Anabaptists and the Moravians in the first class; in the second, that most ancient of secret associations, the Free Masons; and in the third, the different sorts of the Illuminated.

The Anabaptists were rather a revolutionary than a religious sect; and as they owed their existence to political passions,

and not to opinions, they passed away with circumstances. The Moravians, entirely strangers to the interests of this world, are, as I have said, a Christian community of the greatest purity. The Quakers carry into the midst of society the principles of the Moravians: the Moravians withdraw from the world, to be the more sure of remaining faithful to their principles.

Free-masonry is an institution much more serious in Scotland and in Germany than in France. It has existed in all countries; but it nevertheless appears, that it was from Germany especially that this association took its origin; that it was afterwards transported to England by the Anglo-Saxons, and renewed at the death of Charles the First by the partisans of the Restoration, who assembled somewhere near St. Paul's Church for the purpose of recalling Charles the Second to the throne. It is also believed that the Free Masons, especially in Scotland, are, in some manner, connected with the order of Templars. Lessing has written a dialogue upon Free-masonry, in which his luminous genius is very remarkable. He believes that this association has for its object the union of men, in spite of the barriers of society; for if, in

certain respects, the social state forms a bond of connexion between men, by subjecting them to the empire of the laws, it separates them by the differences of rank and government: this sort of brotherhood, the true image of the golden age, has been mingled with many other ideas equally good and moral in Free-masonry. However, we cannot dissemble that there is something in the nature of secret associations which leads the mind to independence; but these associations are very favourable to the developement of knowledge for every thing which men do by themselves, and spontaneously gives their judgment more strength and more comprehensiveness. It is also possible that the principles of democratical equality may be propagated by this species of institution, which exhibits mankind according to their real value, and not according to their several ranks in the world. Secret associations teach us what is the power of number and of union, while insulated citizens are, if we may use the expression, abstract beings with relation to each other. In this point of view these associations may have a great influence in the state; but it is, nevertheless, just to acknowledge, that Free-masonry, in gene-

ral, is only occupied with religious and philosophical interests: its members are divided into two classes, the Philosophical Free-masonry, and the Hermetic or Egyptian Free-masonry. The first has for its object the internal church, or the developement of the spirituality of the soul; the second is connected with the sciences—with those sciences which are employed upon the secrets of nature. The Rosicrucian brotherhood, among others, is one of the degrees of Free-masonry, and this brotherhood originally consisted of Alchymists. At all times, and in every country, secret associations have existed, whose members have aimed at mutually strengthening each other in their belief of the soul's spirituality. The mysteries of Eleusis among the Pagans, the sect of the Essenes among the Hebrews, were founded upon this doctrine, which they did not choose to profane by exposing it to the ridicule of the vulgar. It is nearly thirty years since there was an assembly of Free-masons, presided over by the Duke of Brunswick, at Wilhelms-Bad. This assembly had for its object the reform of the Free Masons in Germany; and it appears, that the opinions of the Mystics in general, and

those of St. Martin in particular, had much influence over this society. Political institutions, social relations, and often even those of our family, comprehend only the exterior of life. It is then natural, that at all times men should have sought some intimate manner of knowing and understanding each other, and also those whose characters have any depth, believe they are adepts, and endeavour to distinguish themselves, by some signs, from the rest of mankind. Secret associations degenerate with time, but their principle is almost always an enthusiastic feeling restrained by society.

There are three classes of the Illuminated, the Mystical, the Visionary, and the Illuminated: the first class, that of which Jacob Boëhmen, and in the last age Paschal and St. Martin, might be considered as the chiefs, is united by many ties to that internal church which is the sanctuary of re-union for all religious philosophers: these illuminated are only occupied with religion and with nature, interpreted by the doctrines of religion. The Visionary Illuminated, at the head of whom we must place the Swedish Swedenborg, believe, that, by the power of the will, they can make the dead appear, and

work other miracles. The late King of Prussia, Frederick-William, has been led into error by the credulity of these men, or by their artifices, which had the appearance of credulity. The Ideal Illuminated look down upon these visionaries as empirics; they despise their pretended prodigies, and think that the wonderful sentiments of the soul belong to them only in an especial manner:—in a word, men who have had no other object than that of securing the chief authority in all states, and of getting places for themselves, have taken the name of the Illuminated. Their chief was a Bavarian, Weisshaupt, a man of superior understanding, and who had thoroughly felt the power that we may acquire, by uniting the scattered strength of individuals, and by directing them all to the same object. The possession of a secret, whatever it may be, flatters the self-love of men; and when they are told that they are something that their equals are not, they always gain a command over them. Self-love is hurt by resembling the multitude; and, from the moment that we choose to assume public or private marks of distinction, we are sure to set in motion the fancy of vanity, which is the most active of all

fancies. The political Illuminated have only borrowed from the others some signs of recognition; but interests, and not opinions, are their rallying points: their object, it is true, was to reform the social order upon new principles; but while they waited the accomplishment of this great work, their first aim was to seize upon public offices. Such a sect has adepts enough in every country, who initiate themselves into its secrets. In Germany, however, perhaps this sect is the only one which has been founded upon a political combination; all the others have taken their rise from some sort of enthusiasm, and have only had for their object the inquiry after truth. Amongst these men who endeavour to penetrate the secrets of nature, we must reckon the Magnetizers, the Alchymists, &c. It is probable that there is much folly in these pretended discoveries, but what can we find alarming in them? If we come to the detection of that which is called marvellous in physical phænomena, we shall have reason to think there are moments when Nature appears a machine which is constantly moved by the same springs, and it is then that her inflexible regularity alarms us; but when we fancy we occasionally see

in her something voluntary, like thought, a confused hope seizes upon the soul, and steals us away from the fixed regard of necessity.

At the bottom of all these attempts, and of all these scientific and philosophical systems, there is always a very marked bias towards the spirituality of the soul. Those who wish to divine the secrets of nature, are entirely opposed to the materialists; for it is always in thought that they seek the solution of the enigma of the physical world. Doubtless, such a movement in the mind may lead to great errors, but it is so with every thing animated—as soon as there is *life* there is danger. Individual efforts would end by being interdicted, if we were to subject ourselves to that method which aims at regulating the movements of the mind, as discipline commands those of the body. The difficulty then consists in directing the faculties without restraining them, and we should wish that it was possible to adapt to the imagination of men, the art yet unknown of still rising on wings, and of directing our flight in the air.

CHAPTER IX.

Of the Contemplation of Nature.

In speaking of the influence of the new philosophy upon the sciences, I have already made mention of some of the new principles adopted in Germany, relative to the study of nature. But as religion and enthusiasm have a great share in the contemplation of the universe, I shall point out, in a general manner, the political and religious views that we may collect upon this point in the writings of the Germans. Many naturalists, guided by a pious feeling, have thought it their duty to limit themselves to the examination of final causes. They have endeavoured to prove that every thing in the world tends to the support and the physical well-being of individuals and of classes. It appears to me that we may make very strong objections to this system. Without doubt it is easy to see, that, in the order of things, the means are admirably adapted to their ends. But in this universal concatena-

tion, where are those causes bounded, which are effects, and those effects which are causes? If we choose to refer every thing to the preservation of man, we shall find it difficult to conceive what he has in common with the majority of beings: besides, it is to attach too much value to material existence, to assign that as the ultimate object of creation. Those who, notwithstanding the great crowd of particular misfortunes, attribute a certain sort of goodness to Nature, consider her as a merchant, who, making speculations on a large scale, balances small losses by greater advantages. This system is not suitable even to the governments of men; and scrupulous writers in political economy have opposed it. What then will be the case, if we consider the intentions of the Deity? A man, regarded in a religious light, is as much as the human race; and from the moment that we have conceived the idea of an immortal soul, we have no right to decide what is the degree of importance which an individual holds in his relation to the whole body. Every intelligent being is of an infinite value, because his soul is eternal. It is then in the most elevated point of view that the

German philosophers have considered the universe. There are those who believe they see in every thing two principles, that of good and that of evil, continually opposing each other; and whether we attribute this contest to an infernal power, or whether, according to a simpler thought, the natural world may be the image of the good and bad propensities of man, it is true that the universe always offers to our observation two faces, which are absolutely contrary to each other. There is, we cannot deny it, a terrible side in nature as well as in the human heart, and we feel there a dreadful power of anger. However good may be the intention of the partisans of optimism, more depth is apparent, I think, in those who do not deny evil, but who acknowledge the connexion of this evil with the liberty of man, with the immortality which he may deserve by the right use of that liberty. The mystical writers, of whom I have spoken in the preceding chapter, see in man the abridgment of the world, and in the world, the emblem of the doctrines of Christianity. Nature seems to them the corporeal image of the Deity, and they are continually plunging further into the pro-

found signification of things and beings. Amongst the German writers, who have been employed upon the contemplation of nature under a religious point of view, there are two who merit particular attention: Novalis as a poet, and Schubert as a naturalist. Novalis, who was a man of noble birth, was initiated from his youth in the studies of every kind, which the new school has developed in Germany; but his pious soul has given a great character of simplicity to his poems. He died at the age of twenty-six; and, when he was no more, the religious hymns, which he had composed, acquired a striking celebrity in Germany. This young man's father is a Moravian; and, some time after the death of his son, he went to visit a community of that persuasion, and heard his son's hymns sung in their church; the Moravians having chosen them for their own edification, without knowing the author of them.

Amongst the works of Novalis, some Hymns to Night are distinguished, which very forcibly depict the train of recollections which it awakens in the mind. The blaze of day may agree with the joyous doctrines of Paganism; but the starry heaven seems the real temple of the purest worship. It is

in the darkness of night, says a German poet, that immortality is revealed to man; the light of the sun dazzles the eyes, which imagine they see. Some stanzas of Novalis, on the life of Miners, contain some spirited poetry, of very great effect. He questions the earth which is found in the deep caverns, because it has been the witness of the different revolutions which nature has undergone; and he expresses a vehement desire to penetrate still farther towards the centre of the globe. The contrast of this boundless curiosity with the frail life, which is to be exposed to gratify it, causes a sublime emotion. Man is placed on earth between infinity in the heavens and infinity in the abysses; and his life, spent under the influence of time, is likewise between two eternities. Surrounded on all sides by boundless ideas and objects, innumerable thoughts appear to him like millions of lights, which throw their blaze together to dazzle him. Novalis has written much upon nature in general; he calls himself, with reason, the disciple of Saïs, because in this city the temple of Isis was built, and the traditions that remain of the Egyptian mysteries lead us to believe that their priests

had a profound knowledge of the laws of the universe.

" Man," says Novalis, " is united to Na-
" ture by relations almost as various, almost
" as inconceivable, as those which he main-
" tains with his kind: as she brings herself
" down to the comprehension of children,
" and takes delight in their simple hearts, so
" does she appear sublime to exalted minds,
" and divine to divine beings. The love of
" Nature assumes various forms, and while
" it excites in some persons nothing but joy
" and pleasure, it inspires the arts with the
" most pious religion, with that which gives
" a direction and a support to the whole of
" life. Long since, among the ancient na-
" tions, there have been men of serious
" spirit, for whom the universe was the
" image of the Deity; and others, who be-
" lieved they were only invited to the ban-
" quet of the world: the air, for these con-
" vivial guests of existence, was only a re-
" freshing draught; the stars were only
" torches which lit the dance during the
" night; and plants and animals only the
" magnificent preparations for a splendid
" feast: Nature did not present herself to
" their eyes as a majestic and tranquil temple,

" but as the brilliant theatre of ever novel
" entertainments.

" At the same time, however, some more
" profound minds were employed, without
" relaxation, in rebuilding that ideal world,
" the traces of which had already disap-
" peared; they partook, like brothers, the
" most sacred labours; some endeavoured to
" reproduce, in music, the voice of the woods
" and winds; others impressed the image
" and the presentiment of a more noble race
" upon stone and brass; changed the rocks
" into edifices; and brought to light the
" treasures hidden under the earth. Nature,
" civilized by man, seemed to answer his de-
" sires: the imagination of the artist dared
" to question her, and the golden age seemed
" to reappear, by the help of thought.

" In order to understand Nature, we must
" be incorporated with her. A poetical and
" reflective life, a holy and religious soul,
" all the strength and all the bloom of hu-
" man existence, are necessary to attain
" this comprehension; and the true observer
" is he who can discover the analogy of that
" nature with man, and that of man with
" Heaven."

Schubert has composed a book upon Na-

ture, that never tires in the perusal; so filled is it with ideas that excite meditation: he presents the picture of new facts, the concatenation of which is conceived under new points of view. We derive two principal ideas from his work. The Indians believe in a descending metempsychosis, that is, in the condemnation of the soul of man to pass into animals and plants, as a punishment for having misused this life. It would be difficult for us to imagine a system of more profound misery; and the writings of the Indians bear the melancholy stamp of their doctrine. They believe they see every where, in animals as in plants, thought as as a captive, and feeling enslaved, vainly endeavouring to disengage themselves from the gross and silent forms which imprison them. The system of Schubert is more consolatory. He represents Nature as an ascending metempsychosis, in which, from the stone to human life, there is a continual promotion, which makes the vital principle advance by degrees, even to the most complete perfection.

Schubert also believes that there have been epochs, where man had so lively and so delicate a feeling of existing phænomena,

that, by his own impressions, he conjectured the most hidden secrets of Nature. These primitive faculties have become dull; and it is often the sickly irritability of the nerves, which, while it weakens the power of reasoning, restores to man that instinct which he formerly owed to the very plenitude of his strength. The labours of philosophers, of learned men, and of poets, in Germany, aim at diminishing the dry power of argumentation, without in the least obscuring knowledge. It is thus that the imagination of the ancient world may be born again, like the phœnix, from the ashes of all errors.

The greater number of naturalists have attempted to explain Nature like a good government, in which every thing is conducted according to wise principles of administration; but it is in vain that we try to transfer this prosaic system to creation. Neither the terrible, nor even the beautiful, can be explained by this circumscribed theory; and Nature is by turns too cruel and too magnificent to permit us to subject her to that sort of calculation which directs our judgment in the affairs of this world.

There are objects hideous in themselves,

whose impression upon us is inexplicable. Certain figures of animals, certain forms of plants, certain combinations of colours, revolt our senses, without our being at all able to give an account of the causes of this repugnance: we would say, that these ungraceful *contours*, these repulsive images, suggest the ideas of baseness and perfidy; although nothing in the analogies of reason can explain such an association of ideas. The physiognomy of man does not exclusively depend (as some writers have pretended) upon the stronger or weaker character of the features; there is transmitted through the look and the change of countenance, I know not what expression of the soul, impossible to be mistaken; and it is above all, in the human form, that we are taught what is extraordinary and unknown in the harmonies of mind and body.

Accidents and misfortunes, in the course of nature, have something so rapid, so pitiless, and so unexpected about them, that they appear to be miraculous. Disease and its furies are like a wicked life, which seizes on a sudden upon a life of tranquillity. The affections of the heart make us feel the cruelty of that nature, which it is attempted

to represent as so sweet and so gentle. What dangers threaten a beloved person! under how many shapes is death disguised around us! there is not a fine day which may not conceal the thunderbolt; not a flower whose juices may not be empoisoned; not a breath of air which may not bring a fatal contagion: and Nature appears like a jealous mistress, ready to pierce the bosom of man at the very moment that she animates him with her kindness. How can we comprehend the object of all these phænomena, if we confine ourselves to the ordinary connexion of our thoughts on these subjects? How can we consider animals without being plunged into the astonishment which their mysterious existence causes? *A poet has called them the dreams of Nature, and man her waking.* For what end were they created? what mean those looks which seem covered with an obscure cloud, behind which an idea strives to show itself? what connexion have they with us? what part of life is it they enjoy? A bird survives a man of genius, and I know not what strange sort of despair seizes the heart when we have lost what we love, and when we see the breath of existence still animate an insect which

moves upon the earth, from which the most noble object has disappeared. The contemplation of Nature overwhelms our thoughts. We feel ourselves in a state of relation with her, which does not depend upon the good or evil which she can do; but her visible soul endeavours to find ours in her bosom, and holds converse with us. When darkness alarms us, it is not always the peril to which it exposes us that we dread, but it is the sympathy of night with every sort of privation, or grief, with which we are penetrated. The sun, on the contrary, is like an emanation from the Deity, like a glorious messenger, who tells us that our prayer is heard: his rays descend upon the earth not only to direct the labours of man, but to express a feeling of love for Nature. The flowers turn towards the light, in order to receive it; they are closed during the night, and at morn and eve they seem in aromatic perfume to breathe their hymns of praise. When these flowers are reared in the shade, they are of pallid hue, and no longer clad in their accustomed colours; but when we restore them to the day, in them the Sun reflects his varied beams, as in the rainbow. And one should say, that he gazes

upon himself with pride, in the mirror of that beauty which he has conferred upon them. The sleep of vegetables, during certain hours, and at certain seasons of the year, is in accord with the motion of the earth: the globe, in its revolving motion, hurries away, through various regions, the half of plants, of animals, and of men, asleep: the passengers in this great vessel, which we call the world, suffer themselves to be rocked in the circle which their journeying habitation describes.

The peace and discord, the harmony and dissonance, which a secret bond unites, are the first laws of Nature; and whether she appears fearful, terrible, or attractive, the sublime unity, which is her character, always makes her known.

Fire rushes in waves, like the torrent: the clouds that travel through the air sometimes assume the form of mountains and of valleys, and appear to imitate in their sport the image of the earth. It is said in Genesis, that the Almighty divided the waters of the earth from the waters of heaven, and suspended these last in the air. The heavens are in fact a noble ally of the ocean. The azure of the firmament is reflected in the

waters, and the waves are painted in the clouds. Sometimes, when the storm is preparing in the atmosphere, the sea trembles at a distance, and one should say, that it answers, by the agitation of its waves, to the mysterious signal of the tempest which it has received.

M. De Humboldt says, in his scientific and poetical Views of Southern America, that he has witnessed a phænomenon, which is also to be observed in Egypt, and which is called *mirage*. On a sudden, in the most arid deserts, the reverberation of the air assumes the appearance of a lake, or of the sea; and the very animals, panting with thirst, rush towards these deceitful images, hoping to allay that thirst. The different figures that the hoar-frost traces on the window, present another example of these strange analogies. The vapours condensed by the cold designate landscapes, like those which are remarked in northern countries: forests of pines, mountains bristling with ice, reappear in their robes of white, and frozen Nature takes pleasure in counterfeiting the productions of animated nature.

Not only does Nature reflect herself, but she seems to wish to imitate the works of

man; and to give them, by these means, a singular testimony of her correspondence with them. It is related, that in the islands near Japan, the clouds assume the appearance of regular fortifications.

The fine arts also have their type in Nature; and this luxury of existence is more the object of her care than existence itself: the symmetry of forms, in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, has served for a model to architects; and the reflection of objects and colours in the water, gives an idea of the illusions of painting: the wind (whose murmurs are prolonged in the trembling leaves) discovers the secret of music. And, it has been said, on the shores of Asia, where the atmosphere is most pure, that sometimes, in the evening, a plaintive and sweet harmony is heard, which Nature seems to address to man, in order to tell him that she herself breathes, that she herself loves, that she herself suffers.

Often at the sight of a lovely country we are tempted to believe that its only object is to excite in man exalted and spotless sentiments: I know not what connexion it is which exists between the heavens and the pride of the human heart; between the rays

of the moon, that repose upon the mountain, and the calm of conscience; but these objects hold a beautiful language to man, and we are capable of wholly yielding to the agitation which they cause: this abandonment would be good for the soul. When, at eve, at the boundary of the landscape, the heaven appears to recline so closely on the earth, imagination pictures beyond the horizon an asylum of hope, a native land of love, and Nature seems silently to repeat that man is immortal.

The continual succession of birth and death, of which the natural world is the theatre, would produce the most mournful impression, if we did not fancy we saw in that world the indication of the resurrection of all things; and it is the truly religious point of view, in the comtemplation of Nature, to regard it in this manner. We should end by dying of compassion, if we were confined in every thing to the terrible idea of what is irreparable: no animal perishes without our feeling it possible to regret it; no tree falls, without the idea that we shall never see it again in its beauty, exciting in us a mournful reflection. In a word, inanimate objects themselves affect

us when their decay obliges us to quit them: the house, the chair, the table, which have been used by those we loved, interest us; and these objects even excite in us sometimes a sort of compassion, independent of the recollections which they awaken; we regret their well-known form, as if by this form they were made into beings who have seen our daily life, and who ought to have seen us die. If eternity was not the antidote to time, we should attach ourselves to every moment in order to retain it; to every sound, to prolong its vibrations; to every look, to fix its radiance; and our enjoyments would only last for that instant which is necessary to make us feel that they are going, and to bedew their traces with tears, traces which the abyss of days must also swallow up.

A new thought struck me in some writings which were communicated to me by an author of a pensive and profound imagination: he is comparing the ruins of nature with those of art, and of the human species. "The first," he says, "are philosophical; "the second poetical; the third mysterious." A thing highly worthy of remark, in fact, is the very different action of years upon nature, upon the works of genius, and upon

living creatures. Time injures man alone: when rocks are overturned, when mountains sink into vallies, the earth only changes her appearance; her new aspect excites new thoughts in our minds, and the vivifying force undergoes a metamorphose, but not a destruction. The ruins of the fine arts address the imagination: Art rebuilds what time has defaced, and never, perhaps, did a master-piece of art, in all its splendour, impress us with such grand ideas as its own ruins. We picture to ourselves half-destroyed monuments adorned with all that beauty which ever clothes the objects of our regret: but how different is this from the ravages of old age!

Scarcely can we believe that youth once embellished that countenance, of which death has already seized possession: some physiognomies escape degradation by the lustre of the soul; but the human figure, in its decline, often assumes a vulgar expression which hardly allows even of pity. Animals, it is true, lose their strength and their activity with years, but the glowing hue of life does not with them change into livid colours, and their dim eyes do not resemble funeral lamps,

throwing their pallid flashes over a withered cheek.

Even when, in the flower of age, life is withdrawn from the bosom of man, neither the admiration excited by the convulsions of nature, nor the interest awakened by the wreck of monuments, can be made to belong to the inanimate corpse of the most lovely of created beings. The love which cherished this enchanting form, love itself cannot endure the remains of it; and nothing of man exists after him on earth but what makes even his friends tremble.

Ah! what a lesson do the horrors of destruction thus incarnate in the human race afford! Is not this to announce to man that his life is to be elsewhere? Would nature humble him so low, if the Divinity were not willing to raise him up again?

The true final causes of nature are these relations with our soul and our immortal destiny. Physical objects themselves have a destination which is not bounded by the contracted existence of man below; they are placed here to assist in the developement of our thoughts to the work of our moral life. The phænomena of nature must not be

understood according to the laws of matter alone, however well combined those laws may be; they have a philosophical sense and a religious end, of which the most attentive contemplation will never know the extent.

CHAPTER X.

Of Enthusiasm.

MANY people are prejudiced against Enthusiasm; they confound it with Fanaticism, which is a great mistake. Fanaticism is an exclusive passion, the object of which is an opinion; enthusiasm is connected with the harmony of the universe: it is the love of the beautiful, elevation of soul, enjoyment of devotion, all united in one single feeling which combines grandeur and repose. The sense of this word amongst the Greeks affords the noblest definition of it: enthusiasm signifies *God in us.* In fact, when the existence of man is expansive, it has something divine.

Whatever leads us to sacrifice our own comfort, or our own life, is almost always enthusiasm; for the high road of reason, to the selfish, must be to make themselves the object of all their efforts, and to value nothing in the world but health, riches, and power. Without doubt, conscience is suf-

ficient to lead the coldest character into the track of virtue; but enthusiasm is to conscience what honour is to duty: there is in us a superfluity of soul which it is sweet to consecrate to what is fine, when what is good has been accomplished. Genius and imagination also stand in need of a little care for their welfare in the world; and the law of duty, however sublime it may be, is not sufficient to enable us to taste all the wonders of the heart, and of the thought.

It cannot be denied that his own interests, as an individual, surround a man on all sides; there is even in what is vulgar a certain enjoyment, of which many people are very susceptible, and the traces of ignoble passions are often found under the appearance of the most distinguished manners. Superior talents are not always a guarantee against that degradation of nature which disposes blindly of the existence of men, and leads them to place their happiness lower than themselves. Enthusiasm alone can counterbalance the tendency to selfishness; and it is by this divine sign that we recognise the creatures of immortality. When you speak to any one on subjects worthy of holy respect, you perceive at once if he feels a noble trembling;

if his heart beats with elevated sentiments; if he has formed an alliance with the other life, or if he has only that little portion of mind which serves him to direct the mechanism of existence. And what then is human nature when we see in it nothing but a prudence, of which its own advantage is the object? The instinct of animals is of more worth, for it is sometimes generous and proud; but this calculation, which seems the attribute of reason, ends by rendering us incapable of the first of virtues, self-devotion.

Amongst those who endeavour to turn exalted sentiments into ridicule, many are, nevertheless, susceptible of them, though unknown to themselves. War, undertaken with personal views, always affords some of the enjoyments of enthusiasm; the transport of a day of battle, the singular pleasure of exposing ourselves to death, when our whole nature would enjoin to us the love of life, can only be attributed to enthusiasm. The martial music, the neighing of the steeds, the roar of the cannon, the multitude of soldiers clothed in the same colours, moved by the same desire, assembled around the same banners, inspire an emo-

tion capable of triumphing over that instinct which would preserve existence; and so strong is this enjoyment, that neither fatigues, nor sufferings, nor dangers, can withdraw the soul from it. Whoever has once led this life loves no other. The attainment of our object never satisfies us; it is the action of risking ourselves, which is necessary, it is that which introduces enthusiasm into the blood; and although it may be more pure at the bottom of the soul, it is still of a noble nature, when it is able to become an impulse almost physical.

Sincere enthusiasm is often reproached with what belongs only to affected enthusiasm: the more pure a sentiment is, the more odious is a false imitation of it. To tyrannize over the admiration of men is what is most culpable, for we dry up in them the source of good emotions when we make them blush for having felt them. Besides, nothing is more painful than the false sounds which appear to proceed from the sanctuary of the soul itself: Vanity may possess herself of whatever is external; conceit and disgrace are the only evils which will result from it; but when she counterfeits our

inward feelings, she appears to violate the last asylum in which we can hope to escape her. It is easy, nevertheless, to discover sincerity in enthusiasm; it is a melody so pure, that the smallest discord destroys its whole charm; a word, an accent, a look, express the concentrated emotion which answers to a whole life. Persons who are called severe in the world, very often have in them something exalted. The strength which reduces others to subjection may be no more than cold calculation. The strength which triumphs over ourselves is always inspired by a generous sentiment.

Enthusiasm, far from exciting a just suspicion of its excesses, perhaps leads in general to a contemplative disposition, which impairs the power of acting: the Germans are a proof of it; no nation is more capable of feeling or thinking; but when the moment of taking a side is arrived, the very extent of their conceptions detracts from the decision of their character. Character and enthusiasm differ in many respects; we ought to choose our object by enthusiasm, but to approach it by character: thought is nothing without enthusiasm, and action without character;

enthusiasm is every thing for literary nations, character is every thing to those which are active; free nations stand in need of both.

Selfishness takes pleasure in speaking incessantly of the dangers of enthusiasm; this affected fear is in truth derision; if the cunning men of the world would be sincere, they would say, that nothing suits them better than to have to do with persons with whom so many means are impossible, and who can so easily renounce what occupies the greater part of mankind.

This disposition of the mind has strength, notwithstanding its sweetness; and he who feels it knows how to draw from it a noble constancy. The storms of the passions subside, the pleasures of self-love fade away, enthusiasm alone is unalterable; the mind itself would be lost in physical existence, if something proud and animated did not snatch it away from the vulgar ascendancy of selfishness: that moral dignity, which is proof against all attempts, is what is most admirable in the gift of existence; it is for this that in the bitterest pains it is still noble to have lived as it would be noble to die.

Let us now examine the influence of enthusiasm upon learning and happiness. These last reflections will terminate the train of thoughts to which the different subjects that I had to discuss have led me.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the Influence of Enthusiasm on Learning.

THIS chapter is, in some respects, the recapitulation of my whole work; for enthusiasm being the quality which really distinguishes the German nation, we may judge of the influence it exerts over learning, according to the progress of human nature in Germany. Enthusiasm gives life to what is invisible, and interest to what has no immediate action on our comfort in this world; no sentiment, therefore, is more adapted to the pursuit of abstract truths; they are, therefore, cultivated in Germany with a remarkable ardour and firmness.

The philosophers who are inspired by enthusiasm are those, perhaps, who have the most exactness and patience in their labours, and at the same time those who the least endeavour to shine; they love science for itself, and set no value upon themselves, when the object of their pursuit is in question: physical nature pursues its own inva-

riable march over the destruction of individuals; the thought of man assumes a sublime character when it arrives at the power of examining itself from an universal point of view; it then silently assists the triumphs of truth, and truth is, like nature, a force which acts only by a progressive and regular developement.

It may be said, with some reason, that enthusiasm leads to a systematizing spirit; when we are much attached to our ideas, we endeavour to connect every thing with them; but, in general, it is easier to deal with sincere opinions, than with opinions adopted through vanity. If, in our relations with men, we had to do only with what they really think, we should easily understand one another; it is what they affect to think that breeds discord.

Enthusiasm has been often accused of leading to error, but perhaps a superficial interest is much more deceitful; for, to penetrate the essence of things, it is necessary there should be an impulse to excite our attention to them with ardour. Besides, in considering human destiny in general, I believe it may be affirmed, that we shall never arrive at truth, but by elevation of soul;

every thing that tends to lower us is falsehood, and, whatever they may say of it, the error lies on the side of vulgar sentiments.

Enthusiasm, I repeat, has no resemblance to fanaticism, and cannot mislead as it does. Enthusiasm is tolerant, not through indifference, but because it makes us feel the interest and the beauty of all things. Reason does not give happiness in the place of that which it deprives us of; enthusiasm finds, in the musing of the heart, and in depth of thought, what fanaticism and passion comprise in a single idea, or a single object. This sentiment, on account even of its universality, is very favourable to thought and to imagination.

Society developes wit, but it is contemplation alone that forms genius. Self-love is the spring of countries where society prevails, and self-love necessarily leads to jesting, which destroys all enthusiasm.

It is amusing enough, it cannot be denied, to have a quick perception of what is ridiculous, and to paint it with grace and gaiety; perhaps it would be better to deny ourselves this pleasure, but, nevertheless, that is not the kind of jesting the consequences of which are the most to be feared; that which is at-

tached to ideas and to sentiments is the most fatal of all, for it insinuates itself into the source of strong and devoted affections. Man has a great empire over man; and of all the evils he can do to his fellow-creature, the greatest perhaps is to place the phantoms of ridicule between generous emotions and the actions they would inspire.

Love, genius, talent, distress itself, all these sacred things are exposed to irony, and it is impossible to calculate to what point the empire of this irony may extend. There is a relish in wickedness: there is something weak in goodness. Admiration for great things may be made the sport of wit; and he who attaches no importance to any thing, has the air of being superior to every thing: if, therefore, our heart and our mind are not defended by enthusiasm, they are exposed on all sides to be surprised by this darkest shade of the beautiful, which unites insolence to gaiety.

The social spirit is so formed that we are often commanded to laugh, and much oftener are made ashamed of weeping: from what does this proceed? From this—that self-love thinks itself safer in pleasantry than in emotion. A man must be able to rely well

on his wit before he can dare to be serious against a jest; it requires much strength to disclose sentiments which may be turned into ridicule. Fontenelle said, "*I am eighty "years old; I am a Frenchman, and I have "never, through all my life, treated the "smallest virtue with the smallest ridicule.*" This sentence argued a profound knowledge of society. Fontenelle was not a sensible man, but he had a great deal of wit; and whenever a man is endowed with any superiority, he feels the necessity of seriousness in human nature. It is only persons of middling understanding who would wish that the foundation of every thing should be sand, in order that no man might leave upon the earth a trace more durable than their own.

The Germans have not to struggle amongst themselves against the enemies of enthusiasm, which is a great obstacle at least to distinguished men. Wit grows sharper by contest, but talent has need of confidence. It is necessary to expect admiration, glory, immortality, in order to experience the inspiration of genius; and what makes the distinction between different ages is not nature, which is always lavish of the same gifts, but

the opinion which prevails at the epoch in which we live: if the tendency of that opinion is towards enthusiasm, great men spring up on all sides; if discouragement is proclaimed in one country, when in others noble efforts would be excited, nothing remains in literature but judges of the time past.

The terrible events of which we have been witnesses have dried up men's hearts, and every thing that belongs to thought appeared tarnished by the side of the omnipotence of action. Difference of circumstances has led minds to support all sides of the same questions; the consequence has been, that people no longer believe in ideas, or consider them, at best, as means. Conviction does not seem to belong to our times; and when a man says he is of such an opinion, that is understood to be a delicate manner of expressing that he has such an interest.

The most honest men, then, make to themselves a system which changes their idleness into dignity: they say that nothing can be done with nothing; they repeat, with the Hermit of Prague, in Shakspeare, that *what is, is*, and that theories have no influence on the world. Such men leave off with making what they say true; for with such a

mode of thinking they cannot act upon others; and if wit consisted in seeing the *for* and *against* of every subject, it would make the objects which encompass us turn round in such a manner that we could not walk with a firm step upon this tottering ground.

We also see young people, ambitious of appearing free from all enthusiasm, affect a philosophical contempt for exalted sentiments; they think by that to display a precocious force of reason; but it is a premature decay of which they are boasting. They treat talent like the old man who asked, *if Love still existed?* The mind deprived of imagination would gladly treat even Nature with disdain, if Nature were not too strong for it.

We certainly do great mischief to those persons who are yet animated with noble desires, by incessantly opposing them with all the argument which can disturb the most confiding hope; nevertheless, good faith cannot grow weary of itself, for it is not the appearance, but the reality of things which employs her. With whatever atmosphere we may be surrounded, a sincere word was never completely lost; if there is but one day on which success can be gained,

there are ages for the operation of the good which may be done by truth.

The inhabitants of Mexico, as they pass along the great road, each of them carry a small stone to the grand pyramid which they are raising in the midst of their country. No individual will confer his name upon it: but all will have contributed to this monument, which must survive them all.

CHAPTER XII. AND LAST.

Of the Influence of Enthusiasm upon Happiness.

THE course of my subject necessarily leads me here to treat of happiness. I have hitherto studiously avoided the word, because now for almost a century it has been the custom to place it principally in pleasures so gross, in a way of life so selfish, in calculations so narrow and confined, that its very image is sullied and profaned. It, however, may be pronounced with confidence, that of all the feelings of the human heart enthusiasm confers the greatest happiness, that indeed it alone confers real happiness, alone can enable us to bear the lot of mortality in every situation in which fortune has the power to place us.

Vainly would we reduce ourselves to sensual enjoyments; the soul asserts itself on every side. Pride, ambition, self-love, all these are still from the soul, although in them a poisonous and pestilential blast mixes

with its essence. Meanwhile, how wretched is the existence of that crowd of mortals, who, playing the hypocrite with themselves almost as much as with others, are continually employed in repressing the generous emotions, which struggle to revive within their bosoms, as diseases of the imagination, which the open air should at once dispel. How impoverished is the existence of those, who content themselves with abstaining from doing evil, and treat as weakness and delusion the source of the most beautiful deeds and the most noble conceptions! From mere vanity they imprison themselves in obstinate mediocrity, which they might easily have opened to the light of knowledge, which every where surrounds them; they sentence and condemn themselves to that monotony of ideas, to that deadness of feeling, which suffers the days to pass, one after the other, without deriving from them any advantage, without making in them any progress, without treasuring up any matter for future recollection. If time in its course had not cast a change upon their features, what probfs would they have preserved of its having passed at all? If to grow old and to die were not the necessary law of our

nature, what serious reflection would ever have arisen in their minds?

Some reasoners there are, who object that enthusiasm produces a distaste for ordinary life; and that as we cannot always remain in the same frame of mind, it is more for our advantage never to indulge it: and why then, I would ask them, have they accepted the gift of truth, why of life itself, since they well knew that they were not to last for ever? Why have they loved (if indeed they ever have loved), since death at any moment might separate them from the objects of their affection? Can there be a more wretched economy than of the faculties of the soul? They were given us to be improved and expanded, to be carried as near as possible to perfection, even to be prodigally lavished for a high and noble end.

The more we benumb our feelings and render ourselves insensible, the nearer (it will be said) we approach to a state of material existence, and the more we diminish the dominion of pain and sorrow over us. This argument imposes upon many; it consists, in fact, in recommending to us to make an attempt to live with as little of life as possible. But our own degradation is al-

ways accompanied by an uneasiness of mind, for which we cannot account, and which unremittingly attends upon us in secret. The discontent, the shame, and the weariness, which it causes, are arranged by vanity in the garb of impertinence and contempt; but it is very rare that any man can settle peaceably in this confined and desert sphere of being, which leaves him without resource in himself when he is abandoned by the prosperity of the world. Man has a consciousness of the beautiful as well as of the virtuous; and in the absence of the former he feels a void, as in a deviation from the latter he finds remorse.

It is a common accusation against enthusiasm, that it is transitory; man were too much blessed, if he could fix and retain emotions so beautiful; but it is because they are so easily dissipated and lost, that we should strive and exert ourselves to preserve them. Poetry and the fine arts are the means of calling forth in man this happiness of illustrious origin, which raises the depressed heart; and, instead of an unquiet satiety of life, gives an habitual feeling of the divine harmony, in which nature and ourselves claim a part.

There is no duty, there is no pleasure, there is no sentiment, which does not borrow from enthusiasm I know not what charm, which is still in perfect unison with the simple beauty of truth.

All men take up arms indeed for the defence of the land which they inhabit, when circumstances demand this duty of them; but if they are inspired by the enthusiasm of their country, what warm emotions do they not feel within them? The sun, which shone upon their birth, the land of their fathers, the sea which bathes their rocks*, their many recollections of the past, their many hopes for the future, every thing around them presents itself as a summons and encouragement for battle, and in every pulsation of the heart rises a thought of affection and of honour. God has given this country to men who can defend it; to women, who, for its sake, consent to the dangers of their brothers, their husbands, and their sons. At the approach of the perils which threaten it,

* It is easy to perceive, that by this phrase, and by those which follow, I have been trying to designate England; in fact, I could not speak of war with enthusiasm, without representing it to myself as the contest of a free nation for her independence.

a fever, exempt from shuddering as from delirium, quickens the blood in the veins. Every effort, in such a struggle, comes from the deepest source of inward thought. As yet nothing can be seen in the features of these generous citizens but tranquillity; there is too much dignity in their emotions for outward demonstration; but let the signal once be heard, let the banner of their country wave in the air, and you will see those looks, before so gentle, and so ready to resume that character at the sight of misfortune, at once animated by a determination holy and terrible! They shudder no more, neither at wounds nor at blood; it is no longer pain, it is no longer death, it is an offering to the God of armies; no regret, no hesitation, now intrudes itself into the most desperate resolutions; and when the heart is entirely in its object, then is the highest enjoyment of existence! As soon as man has, within his own mind, separated himself from himself, to him life is only an evil; and if it be true, that of all the feelings enthusiasm confers the greatest happiness, it is because, more than any other, it unites all the forces of the soul in the same direction for the same end.

The labours of the understanding are considered by many writers as an occupation almost merely mechanical, and which fills up their life in the same manner as any other profession. It is still something that their choice has fallen upon literature; but have such men even an idea of the sublime happiness of thought when it is animated by enthusiasm? Do they know the hope which penetrates the soul, when there arises in it the confident belief, that by the gift of eloquence we are about to demonstrate and declare some profound truth, some truth which will be at once a generous bond of union between us and every soul that sympathizes with ours?

Writers without enthusiasm, know of the career of literature nothing but the criticisms, the reviling, the jealousies which attend upon it, and which necessarily must endanger our peace of mind, if we allow ourselves to be entangled amongst the passions of men. Unjust attacks of this nature may, indeed, sometimes do us injury; but the true, the heartfelt internal enjoyment which belongs to talent, cannot be affected by them. Even at the moment of the first public appearance of a work, and before its character is yet decided, how many hours of

happiness has it not already been worth to him who wrote it from his heart, and as an act and office of his worship! How many tears of rapture has he not shed in his solitude over those wonders of life, love, glory, and religion? Has he not, in his transports, enjoyed the air of heaven like a bird; the waters like a thirsty hunter; the flowers like a lover, who believes that he is breathing the sweets which surround his mistress? In the world, we have the feeling of being oppressed beneath our own faculties, and we often suffer from the consciousness that we are the only one of our own disposition, in the midst of so many beings, who exist so easily, and at the expense of so little intellectual exertion; but the creative talent of imagination, for some moments at least, satisfies all our wishes and desires; it opens to us treasures of wealth; it offers to us crowns of glory; it raises before our eyes the pure and bright image of an ideal world; and so mighty sometimes is its power, that by it we hear in our hearts the very voice and accents of one whom we have loved.

Does he who is not endowed with an enthusiastic imagination flatter himself that he is, in any degree, acquainted with the earth

upon which he lives, or that he has travelled through any of its various countries? Does his heart beat at the echo of the mountains? or has the air of the south lulled his senses in its voluptuous softness? Does he perceive wherein countries differ, the one from the other? Does he remark the accent, and does he understand the peculiar character of the idioms of their languages? Does he hear in the popular song, and see in the national dance, the manners and the genius of the people? Does one single sensation at once fill his mind with a crowd of recollections?

Is Nature to be felt without enthusiasm? Can common men address to her the tale of their mean interests and low desires? What have the sea and the stars to answer to the little vanities with which each individual is content to fill up each day? But if the soul be really moved within us, if in the universe it seeks a God, even if it be still sensible to glory and to love, the clouds of heaven will hold converse with it, the torrents will listen to its voice, and the breeze that passes through the grove seems to deign to whisper to us something of those we love.

There are some who, although devoid of enthusiasm, still believe that they have a

taste and relish for the fine arts; and indeed they do love the refinement of luxury, and they wish to acquire a knowledge of music and of painting, that they may be able to converse upon them with ease and with taste, and even with that confidence which becomes the man of the world, when the subject turns upon imagination, or upon Nature; but what are these barren pleasures, when compared with true enthusiasm?—What an emotion runs through the brain when we contemplate in the Niobe that settled look of calm and terrible despair which seems to reproach the gods with their jealousy of her maternal happiness? What consolation does the sight of beauty breathe upon us! Beauty also is from the soul, and pure and noble is the admiration it inspires. To feel the grandeur of the Apollo demands in the spectator a pride which tramples under foot all the serpents of the earth. None but a Christian can penetrate the countenance of the Virgins of Raphaël, and the St. Jerome of Domenichino. None but a Christian can recognise the same expression in fascinating beauty, and in the depressed and grief-worn visage; in the brilliancy of youth, and in features changed by age and disfigured

by suffering!—the same expression which springs from the soul, and which, like a ray of celestial light, shoots across the early morning of life, or the closing darkness of age!

Can it be said that there is such an art as that of music for those who cannot feel enthusiasm? Habit may render harmonious sounds, as it were, a necessary gratification to them, and they enjoy them as they do the flavour of fruits, or the ornament of colours; but has their whole being vibrated and trembled responsively, like a lyre, if at any time the midnight silence has been suddenly broken by the song, or by any of those instruments which resemble the human voice? Have they in that moment felt the mystery of their existence in that softening emotion which reunites our separate natures, and blends in the same enjoyment the senses of the soul? Have the beatings of the heart followed the cadence of the music? Have they learned, under the influence of these emotions so full of charms, to shed those tears which have nothing of self in them; those tears which do not ask for the compassion of others, but which relieve ourselves from the inquietude which arises

from the need of something to admire and to love?

The taste for public spectacles is universal, for the greater part of mankind have more imagination than they themselves think; and that which they consider as the allurement of pleasure, as a remnant of the weakness of childhood which still hangs about them, is often the better part of their nature: while they are beholding the scenes of fictions, they are true, natural, and feeling; whereas in the world dissimulation, calculation, and vanity, are the absolute masters of their words, sentiments, and actions. But do they think that they have felt all that a really fine tragedy can inspire, who find in the representation of the strongest affections nothing but a diversion and amusement? Do they doubt and disbelieve that rapturous agitation, which the passions, purified by poetry, excite within us? Ah! how many and how great are the pleasures which spring from fictions! The interest they raise is without either apprehension or remorse; and the sensibility which they call forth has none of that painful harshness from which real passions are hardly ever exempt.

What enchantment does not the language

of love borrow from poetry and the fine arts! How beautiful is it to love at once with the heart and with the mind! thus to vary in a thousand fashions a sentiment which one word is indeed sufficient to express, but for which all the words of the world are but poverty and weakness! to submit entirely to the influence of those master-pieces of the imagination, which all depend upon love, and to discover in the wonders of nature and genius new expressions to declare the feelings of our own heart!

What have they known of love, who have not reverenced and admired the woman whom they loved, in whom the sentiment is not a hymn breathed from the heart, and who do not perceive in grace and beauty the heavenly image of the most touching passions? What has she felt of love, who has not seen in the object of her choice an exalted protector, a powerful and a gentle guide, whose look at once commands and supplicates, and who receives upon his knees the right of disposing of her fate? How inexpressible is the delight which serious reflections, united and blended with warm and lively impressions, produce! The tenderness of a friend, in whose hands our happiness is deposited,

ought, at the gates of the tomb, in the same manner as in the beautiful days of our youth, to form our chief blessing; and every thing most serious and solemn in our existence transforms itself into emotions of delight; when, as in the fable of the ancients, it is the office of love to light and to extinguish the torch of life.

If enthusiasm fills the soul with happiness, by a strange and wondrous charm, it forms also its chief support under misfortune; it leaves behind it a deep trace and a path of light, which do not allow absence itself to efface us from the hearts of our friends. It affords also to ourselves an asylum from the utmost bitterness of sorrow, and is the only feeling which can give tranquillity without indifference.

Even the most simple passions, which every heart believes itself capable of feeling, even filial and maternal love, cannot be felt in their full strength, unless enthusiasm be blended with them. How can we love a son without indulging the flattering hope that he will be generous and gallant, without wishing him that renown which may, as it were, multiply his existence, and make us hear from every side the name which our

own heart is continually repeating? Why should we not enjoy with rapture the talents of a son, the beauty of a daughter? Can there be a more strange ingratitude towards the Deity, than indifference for his gifts? Are they not from Heaven, since they render it a more easy task for us to please him whom we love?

Meanwhile, should some misfortune deprive our child of these advantages, the same sentiment would then assume another form: it would increase and exalt within us the feeling of compassion, of sympathy, the happiness of being necessary to him. Under all circumstances, enthusiasm either animates or consoles; and even in the moment when the blow, the most cruel that can be struck, reaches us, when we lose him to whom we owe our own being, him whom we loved as a tutelary angel, and who inspired us at once with a fearless respect and a boundless confidence, still enthusiasm comes to our assistance and support. It brings together within us some sparks of that soul which has passed away to heaven; we still live before him, and we promise ourselves that we will one day transmit to posterity the history of his life. Never, we feel assured, never will his paternal

hand abandon us entirely in this world; and his image, affectionate and tender, still inclines towards us, to support us, until we are called unto him.

And in the end, when the hour of trial comes, when it is for us in our turn to meet the struggle of death, the increasing weakness of our faculties; the loss and ruin of our hopes; this life, before so strong, which now begins to give way within us; the crowd of feelings and ideas which lived within our bosom, and which the shades of the tomb already surround and envelope; our interests, our passions, this existence itself, which lessens to a shadow, before it vanishes away, all deeply distress us; and the common man appears, when he expires, to have less of death to undergo. Blessed be God, however, for the assistance which he has prepared for us even in that moment; our utterance shall be imperfect, our eyes shall no longer distinguish the light, our reflections, before clear and connected, shall wander vague and confused; but Enthusiasm will not abandon us, her brilliant wings shall wave over the funeral couch; she will lift the veil of death; she will recall to our recollection those moments, when, in the fulness of

energy, we felt that the heart was imperishable; and our last sigh shall be a high and generous thought, reascending to that heaven from which it had its birth.

"O France! land of glory and of love! "if the day should ever come when enthu- "siasm shall be extinct upon your soil, when "all shall be governed and disposed upon "calculation, and even the contempt of "danger shall be founded only upon the "conclusions of reason, in that day what "will avail you the loveliness of your climate, "the splendour of your intellect, the general "fertility of your nature? Their intelligent "activity, and an impetuosity directed by "prudence and knowledge, may indeed give "your children the empire of the world; "but the only traces you will leave on the "face of that world will be like those of the "sandy whirlpool, terrible as the waves, "and sterile as the desert *!"

* This last sentence is that which excited in the French police the greatest indignation against my book. It seems to me, that Frenchmen at least cannot be displeased with it.

END OF THE THIRD AND LAST VOLUME.

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